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BEAUTIFUL STAR.

BY MARCO O. ROLFE.

Oh, beautiful star, as thou shinest afar,
In the sparkling vault of heaven,
With joy I gaze at thy gentle blaze,
Thou gem of purest light!
Thy lovely smile will from pain beguile,
When the sorrowing seek relief;
Thy kindly ray, in its own sweet way,
Calls back the heart from grief.
The dazzling light of the diamond bright,
Is dim compared with thine,
And its partial ray on the proud and gay
Alone will deign to shine;
But thou smilest as fair on the brow of care
As on the joy-lit eye,
And thy ray of love, from the realms above,
Brings mercy from on high.
Oh, beautiful star, that shinest afar,
In the azure vault of heaven,
To thee a power, in this darker hour,
A lovely power is given,
To whisper of Heaven to the soul that's riven,
To smile on the sad and the gay;
And ever is lent, with thy sweetness blent,
Thy gentle and lovely ray.

The Black Crescent: OR, COALS AND ASHES OF LIFE. A MASKED MYSTERY OF BALTIMORE.

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CHEMIST," "THE WARNING ARROW," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERIOUS VISITOR.

WINTER—1871. How mournful the dull, half-smothered voice of the wind as it coursed around the corners and through the streets of the old Monumental! How peculiar the sound of business hum, and how dreary the darkness of advancing night, misted with thick-falling snow!

It was very cold and cheerless; but the rich parlors of Harnden Forde, on Entwaw street, were ablaze and warm, and no gloomy touch of the icy air without could enter there.

Eola Forde, a beautiful girl of twenty-two years—we say girl, for four of those years might have been stricken off without being missed—with rosy cheeks, sweet lips, deep blue eyes, and hair like gilded silk, sat upon one of the rich sofas; and a dainty hand was clasped by a young man at her side, whose words, anon, brought a mantling crimson to the temples of his companion.

At a glance, we know them to be lovers. "Speak, Eola; why are you silent? You never acted in this way before! Oh! have you changed toward me? Have I lost the jewel I so dearly prized as my own? Surely—"

"Austin, Austin," she interrupted, at last, breaking the silence which had called forth the young man's words; "I have not changed—indeed I have not. But—but—" "But what? Ah! you'll tell me, now, why you have behaved so singularly all the evening?"

She cast a quick glance around her, to be sure that they were alone, and then, leaning close to him, whispered:

"Dear Austin, could my own heart's blood be shed to make you happy, I would give it! But listen; something has happened—I don't know what—to make me really afraid of father. He said that, if I married you, it would send him to his grave, and I would be accused forever! Stop!—listen: he said you were sent to fulfill a terrible prophecy!—to perform an awful mission! He said I must not marry you, of all persons!—better stab myself at once! Now, Austin—oh! what can all this mean? You don't know how frightened I am! What—what shall I do?"

She had scarce ceased, when the folding doors between the two parlors were slowly, noiselessly opened, and a man stood there, gazing steadfastly at them.

The sofa partially fronted the windows, and they did not see him.

He was a man of full sixty years, with sparse locks of snowy white, and smooth-shaven face. His features were remarkably thin, like his body, arms and limbs. The eyes were deeply sunken and a dark line marked the lower lid; while the countenance was ghastly pale and of indefinable expression. It was Harnden Forde.

With one hand upon the door-knob—still and motionless he watched them.

Austin Burns looked upon the fair girl at his side in veriest astonishment.

"In Heaven's name, Eola!—what are you saying?"

"Just what father said to me this morning, Austin! What am I to do? I am not only at a loss to understand what he meant, but I am also terribly uneasy. Have you seen him since you were here last?"

"No."

"Then you can form no idea of the change that has come over him."

"I am amazed, Eola! Oh! can it be I am to lose you?" and he clasped the little hand tighter, as if afraid it was to be snatched away there and then.

"No—no—no Austin; not that! But—we must wait—wait until—"

"Eremitry!" interrupted a sepulchral voice.

Harnden Forde stood before them.

With a cry, Eola started to her feet and clutched the back of the sofa for support, as she shrunk before the strange light of her father's eyes.

"Mr. Forde; really you take us by surprise—" began Austin; but he stopped short, as the old gentleman fixed a steady, half-meaningless gaze upon him.

He then saw in Harnden Forde a picture that, for a moment, chilled his veins.



"Ha! a witness!" he cried, as he turned and beheld a woman in black garments, and closely veiled.

So thin, pale, haggard; like a living corpse, with ashen lips; speechless; terrible to contemplate.

Harnden Forde spoke not another word; but raising one hand, a long, white, skinny finger pointed toward the door.

"Father! Father!" burst from Eola's lips, as she made a movement forward; but her courage failed her.

Obedient the silent command of that finger, governed by an uncontrollable awe, Austin arose and, step by step, retreated from the room.

Eola strove to speak. She stretched forth her hands to detain her lover; but they fell nerveless at her side, and her lips seemed glued together.

The eyes of Harnden Forde followed Austin, till the latter had disappeared, and then, in a hollow voice, he bade his daughter follow him, and returned to the back parlor.

She was faint and dizzy, and tottered after him—feeling as though she would cast herself down and scream; but was forced to keep her feet by some nameless, irresistible power.

"Father!" she cried, falling on her knees beside the chair where he had seated himself; "father! oh! in Heaven's name, tell me what ails you? You frighten me! Don't look at me in that way!"

"My child—you have seen Austin Burns again, and I told you, yesterday, it was my wish that you should give him up forever; were his slow-spoken words, as he fixed his dark, sunken eyes upon her, in an unsteady, wavering manner.

"Yes, yes; but I told him we could not think of marriage at—at present."

"You can never marry him!" he declared, huskily, bending forward to lay a hand upon her shoulder.

"Never, father?"

"Ay, never! Would you be cursed? Would you live on, with a most horrible prophecy being fulfilled, in which Heaven itself could not offer a bourn of one hour's peace? Would you send me to my grave?"

"Only to be driven from it, to stalk the tombly forests in unrest and despair! Would you?"

"Stop! Stop! What horrible things are you saying? You will drive me distracted! Tell me—tell me—what is the matter?"

"I can not!" and with the answer, he sunk back and closed his eyes, as if to shut out some unearthly vision which rose before him.

Eola trembled. What could so work up her father to a pitch of mysterious despair and superstitious terror? In what way was this superstition connected with Austin Burns and herself?

It was more unaccountable, from the fact that, hitherto, Harnden Forde had always greeted the young man cordially, when he latter visited his betrothed.

And the change in Forde's demeanor was

as sudden, as abrupt as the explosion of a cannon in a hidden ambush.

"Father," she said, more calmly, after a moment's silence, "you talk to me in riddles. You have always expressed a great liking for Austin. It was only yesterday you first mentioned a change in your opinion. What has he done?"

"Nothing," in a subdued, uneven tone.

"Nothing! And while he has no fault, you would not have me marry him? Father, I must resist this. Have you been dreaming?—had ugly nightmares?—which you give in extenuation for this separation of two fond, devoted hearts? You must explain. I fear I have already lost Austin, by what has occurred this evening. I must send a note and bring him back—"

"No! no! The curse!—the prophecy!" he interrupted, in a hollow voice, and half-starting up.

"The curse! What curse? What prophecy?"

Eola's inquiry was one of unbounded astonishment.

"Nothing, nothing. Go to your room, my child. Ask me no more of this. But remember—woe! woe! to you, from the day you marry Austin Burns. Let him bid you adieu forever. Now go—go to your room."

Reluctantly she left him. He did not rise; and with a parting glance at her singularly-altered parent, as he sat like a statue, with eyelids closed and arms hanging listlessly, she ascended to her room, her mind turbid with wondering and uneasy thoughts.

She had scarce left him when the door-bell struck with a louder echo than usual to its small brass gong.

There was something in the clear sound as it broke the stillness of the house, which roused Harnden Forde, with a start, from his random reverie; and he listened to the step of the servant who answered the summons.

Presently the door of the back parlor opened.

"There's a man in the vestibule to see you, sir."

"Who—who is it?"

"That I don't know, sir; for his face 's hid by a broad-brim hat."

"Is there no card?—no name?"

"No, sir."

Harnden Forde thought a moment. It was already growing late. Who would call upon him at that hour?

"Show him in," he said, at last.

The visitor was admitted.

A tall, broad-shouldered individual, wrapped in a heavy overcoat, with pants tucked in a pair of heavy cowhide boots, and a black, slouch hat pulled down over his brow.

But, the servant had made a mistake in supposing that the rim of the hat concealed the face of the comer; it was a mask of brown silk and lace trimming.

Upon his entrance, Forde arose.

"You wish to see me, sir?"

"And is this, indeed, Harnden Forde?" returned a deep voice, questioningly.

"It is."

"How changed, since last we met!" continued the other, regarding him closely.

"Remove your mask, that I may—"

"No. Here—read this," presenting a slip of paper as he spoke.

The voice—the mien of the masked visitor, had a marked effect upon Forde, who vainly endeavored to pierce the other's disguise.

"Who are you?" he asked, without noticing the outstretched hand.

"No matter. Read that note, and—give me an answer!"

Advancing with infirm step, he took the note, and, unfolding it, began to read.

But, he had no sooner glanced over the first lines, than he uttered a sharp cry, and, with face paler than ever, staggered back against the wall.

"Who—who—who are you? Where did you get this?" he gasped, chokingly.

"I have said it matters not who I am. Give me an answer to that note. There is a pencil—and paper," saying which, the unknown produced the articles and laid them upon the table. Then he added, pointing to them, and turning to the shrinking form of Harnden Forde:

"Come!"

CHAPTER II.

A BLOW IN THE DARK, AND THE WOMAN IN BLACK.

At the moment we introduced Austin Burns and his betrothed to the reader, in the parlors of Harnden Forde, there was an individual standing on the opposite side of the street, obscured within the deep shadows of one of the high-railling steps which were prominent in that locality.

In one hand he held a pair of powerful glasses, and through these he was intently watching the lovers.

His brow knit with a frown, and his teeth gritted in half-smothered anger, as he marked their actions.

"Ah! see," he muttered, presently; "the folding doors open—Forde is standing there—now he advances—he stands before them—he points to the door! Good! Austin Burns is going—yes, Forde has obeyed me. See! Eola—she attempts to stay her lover—it is useless! Father and daughter are alone—they go to the back parlor. I am obeyed! Ha! Ha! But, Burns is coming out! Now, will the boy execute his errand? Yes—there—"

"Eremitry Bulletin, second edition. Bulletin, sir, one cent!"

"No," and young Burns was hastening away; when the boy ran alongside of him, and continued:

"I guess you must be he, sir; is your name Burns?"

"Yes," Austin paused.

"Then, here's a letter for you, sir; I was told to give it to you—if your name's Burns?"

"That's my name," snatching the note, almost involuntarily; for his mind was too full of other thoughts to particularly remark this occurrence.

In a moment the boy vanished, his clear voice crying his last copy of the *Bulletin*, upon which he was "stuck"—a thing unaccountable, when considering the impetus given to the circulation of that paper by its having been the first to furnish Baltimoreans with the authentic news of the downfall of Paris.

Walking to the nearest gaslight, Austin read as follows:

"Meet me, to-night, on the Jones' Falls bridge, at Fayette street, and your life mystery shall be solved. I will tell you who you are."

"A Friend."

The tiny paper was crunched in his grasp, and an indescribable thrill shot through his frame.

"Who can it be?" he exclaimed, gazing vacantly at the snow-covered pavement. "Who can tell me who I am? Heavens! I never thought! Can the mystery of my identity be the cause of Forde's behavior toward me? But, how could he have learned—ah! here—some one will explain all! Then, Eola—dear, sweet girl—I may possess you yet, if that is the ground of your father's action! How opportune this friend!"

He consulted his watch. It was after ten o'clock.

"The note does not say what time. I'll go now!"

He started off at a quick pace, carefully preserving the note; for it was most valuable to him.

At the corner of Baltimore and Entwaw streets, a car overtook him, and getting in, he seated himself to meditate in eager anticipation of the expected news.

The man on the opposite side of the street followed after him, and when Austin got into the car, he of the glasses ran ahead and jumped onto the front platform, sharing the driver's snowy "berth."

Both the watcher and the watched were scarce out of sight, when a man and woman, who had evidently been spying the movements of the others, glided out from the shade of another door-step, close by.

"Start upon your mission, Wat," said the woman; "I will be at the library window at twelve. There's mischief afoot, and I must prevent it."

With these words, she sped after the car; while the man took his way across the street.

The last-named party was the bearer of the note which preyed so overwhelmingly upon the mind of Harnden Forde.

A word of Austin Burns at this point.

He was, at least, twenty-five years of age. His face was not what the fastidious would term handsome; but, there was that in it

which bespoke an honorable mind, and therefore, won respect.

The young man knew no relative in the world. When in his twentieth year, he was called to the bedside of one whom he had always considered his uncle—then dying. And there he learned something astounding of himself.

The gentleman was not his uncle; but had assumed that position toward him, ever since the night he found Austin upon his door-step, with the little chubby hands tightly clasping a purse containing notes to the amount of twenty thousand dollars!

Fortunately, he fell into good hands. The money was placed out at interest, and appropriated to the benefit of the little waif.

Austin received a thorough education, grew to the estate of manhood, and, at the crisis mentioned, came into the possession of the money.

But the mystery of his birth was a burden to his mind.

Nothing seemed to present in which he could discover a clue; and time and again he had given over, discouraged—only to find himself yearning more and more, as the months flew by, for one bright ray to dispel the cloud.

An acquaintance was formed with Eola. They grew intimate—loved. Harnden Forde gave him warmest encouragement; and the scene which had been enacted within the half hour, the unfathomable words of Eola—both combined to strike upon his brain like a thunderbolt, to confuse and distract his thoughts.

But, if Harnden Forde had discovered the young man's ignorance of his birth, and his late action was based upon that, then Eola was not yet lost!

"A friend" was ready to aid, to clear the mystery, to furnish all desirable information.

Alighting at Harrison street, he walked up to Fayette, and turned to the bridge.

It was a dim, uninviting locality. The snow had ceased to fall, and the murky surrounding lent a deserted gloom; while the high shot-tower reared its lofty bulk before him, like a grim specter of gigantic proportions.

"There is no one here!" fell from his lips, as he looked about him for some sign of the "friend."

As if in reply, there was a light step behind him, and a muffled figure came up.

"You are Austin Burns?" said an unknown voice, from behind a thick coat collar.

"That is my name. Did you send me a note?"

"Yes."

"Then I am here in answer to it. You signed yourself 'a friend.' I do not know you."

"You are the affianced of Eola Forde?"

"I am; but it does not concern you."

"It does."

"This is not our business, sir," interrupted the young man.

The figure drew nigher. But Austin was not suspicious.

"You would know who you are? But I can not tell you."

"Then you have written a falsehood! For what purpose?"

"This! curse you!"

Something flashed before the young man's eyes. There was a faint bound—a thud—and Austin, with a quick groan, sunk down upon the snow.

"Murderer!" hissed a voice in the ear of the unknown.

"Ha! a witness!" he cried, as he turned and beheld a woman in black garments, and closely veiled.

Again the murderous knife was poised to strike, when she threw back the veil, and stepped to within a few inches of him.

One glance, one searching scrutiny of a moment's duration, and, with a startled exclamation, he fled from the white face which so fearlessly confronted him, as if pursued by an apparition from the grave, dropping the knife in his precipitate retreat.

Kneeling beside Austin Burns, the woman placed a hand over his heart. It still beat.

The warm blood, from an ugly wound in the left shoulder, crimsoned the white carpet about them.

But the blow had not proven fatal; and though she might not have been a physician or surgeon, she saw this, and also, that he was not entirely insensible.

Overcome by the suddenness of the assault, wrought upon by the peculiar sensation of cold steel in his flesh, besides the fact of having struck his head against the wooden railing as he fell, Austin lay in a semi-conscious state.

Presently he opened his eyes, and, under the impression that the would-be assassin stood over him, he made an effort to regain his feet, at the same time grasping the arm that was busy staunching the cut.

"Easy, sir. Be very careful. You are badly hurt."

"Who are you?" he asked, faintly, perceiving, for the first time, that it was a woman.

"A friend," was her brief reply, still busy with his wound.

"Ah! then you sent me the note which brought me here—and to this accident!"

"No. It was an enemy to both of us. I had hoped to prevent this, but arrived too late. There—rise now. But move slowly. Your wound can be better dressed, soon."

"Where is the wretch who struck me?"

"Gone. But, come, Mr. Burns, you must go with me. I do not live far."

"You know my name? You are a stranger to me?"

"Though a stranger, you have not a truer friend. Trust me, and you shall not regret it. Your life is not safe in the city of Baltimore, while you are the affianced of Eola Forde! There are those who hate you; and the hate is deadly, for you do not know your enemies. Ah! here is the knife," (picking up the weapon, whose bright blade had attracted her glance). "Come, now. Your enemies must think you dead. It will serve our plans to defeat them. I am deeply concerned in your welfare, Mr. Burns—deeper than you can imagine. Come."

Guided by an impulse, which prompted him to obey, he went with her.

They slowly left the bridge; he holding to her arm for a slight assistance; for the loss of considerable blood had left him in a condition somewhat weakened.

Continuing eastward a few squares, they entered a neat, two-story brick house, and Austin found himself in a plainly furnished but cozy parlor, where a glowing grate afforded a cheering warmth to his benumbed limbs.

"Be seated, sir. This is my home. I have no friends—live almost entirely alone. It may not be long before you know why I prefer seclusion, and why I am interested

in you. Stay here, while I go for a physician," saying which, she went out, and left him to his thoughts.

During the few seconds of her speech, he had seen, by the light of two large, brilliantly burning lamps, that his new friend was, to judge closely, about forty-four or five, with sad countenance, and dark eyes of weary glance. Her hair was that of a lady, and on the third finger of the left hand was a marriage ring, worn thin with the lapse of time.

While Austin Burns was fixing the features of the dark, mighty terror, and enduring no little pain from the stab in his shoulder, as he sat there awaiting her return with medical assistance—at precisely the same moment, two men were standing near the small side-counter at "Wilson's," seemingly engrossed with discussing the flavor and steam of a hot "punch"; while an occasional glance over the shoulder, betrayed the fact that they feared a third party to their low-voiced conversation.

CHAPTER III.

TWO THREATENING LETTERS AND A DESPERATE ACTION.

FURTHER back, closer to the wall, as if he momentarily expected a deadly attack on the part of the man before him, shrunk Harnden Forde.

His lower jaw hung, and his sunken eyes seemed, for a second, to lose all light of intelligence—to become the orbs of a helpless idiot.

Helpless he certainly was; palsied in voice and limb, save that, in the latter, he trembled like a weakened frame before a stunning blast.

And this state of spirit, crushed beneath the weight of the mighty terror, was caused by the note he had just read.

At last, with an effort which required his every strength of self-mastery, he gasped, while he still covered before his strange visitor:

"Will you tell me who you are? Where do you come from?"

"Again, and for the last time, I say, no matter. You know who I come from; so let that suffice. Come—your answer."

"Is this the woman in this city?" persisted Forde, tremulously, and scarce above his breath.

"Answer that note!" commanded the other, impatiently.

Compelled by an influence which mechanically controlled his actions, Harnden Forde staggered to a seat at the table, and, snatching up the pencil, wrote:

"I dare not refuse!"

"There is my answer," he faltered, dropping the pencil, and pushing the paper from him.

Again he essayed to pierce the other's mask. In vain.

The man took up the slip, read it, and then carefully placed it in his breast-pocket, saying:

"It is satisfactory. See that you obey. Now, I am your guest for to-night."

"Ha—"

"Ay; why not? The Eutaw House is a good distance from here, and the walking is bad. Perhaps I shall leave the city to-morrow. It is late—have me shown to my room."

"Tell me who you are?" again asked Forde, hesitantly.

The eyes of the questioned party fixed piercingly upon the interrogator; and then their owner said, forcibly:

"I am a friend to the victim of your early wickedness. I am her champion. She is near you."

"Near me? In this city?" and he leaned eagerly forward to catch the reply.

"Have you ever repented your vile deed of years ago?" continued he of the disguise, without noticing the interruption.

"I have! I have!" groaned Forde, burying his face in his hands. "Would to Heaven that what is done could be undone—without—"

"Without hurting your interests, you would say? Bah!"

"Man, hear me!"—a portion of his strength seeming to return, as he stepped forward and grasped the wrist of the veiled "champion"—"if Bertha Blake is in this city, lead me to her! She loved me once; and she will hate me now; but she will forgive when—"

"Mark me, Harnden Forde: I will do this, if—"

"If what? Speak! It shall be done."

"Hold. You are hasty. But let me test your sincerity. Where is the certificate of marriage between you and Bertha Blake?"

"In my desk—"

There was something in the fire of those mask-encircled eyes, which betrayed suspense and eagerness in the listener; and for his intended words, he substituted:

"You shall have it, if Bertha Blake will leave me, forever."

"That is but half. Two articles must come together. I will not accept one without the other—*The Black Crescent*!"

With a cry that might have resembled the wail of a lost soul entering the regions of eternal misery, Forde recoiled backward, and fell to the floor.

The first movement of the man was to lock the door; which he did quickly. For the cry had been heard, and footsteps approaching soon sounded in the entry.

Taking up a pitcher of water, he sprinkled the face of the suddenly and singularly-stricken old gentleman.

Presently the latter opened his eyes, and, at the same instant, came a knock at the door.

"Bid them begone," commanded the unknown, in a whisper.

Forde ordered his servants to depart, and then added, as he arose feebly to his feet:

"For God's sake!—be merciful. Make me your slave, if you will; but I can not give that up. I won't!—be my shame what it may—at once. Have—have you no sympathy for penitence?"

"It is useless. The time for repentance is past—past three years ago, when you spurned Bertha Blake—for the second time—from you! I, her champion, swear that you shall yet make amends for the vile injustice she has suffered at your hands! Her claim shall be recognized! *The Black Crescent* shall be restored!"

Forde did not sink at this second mention of the mysterious *Crescent*; but from his ashen lips fell, beseechingly:

"No—no—no; consider my position! To be dragged down now! To be hurled, like an accursed pigmy, upon a hooting world! To—"

"Like you served Bertha Blake! You were anxious a moment since, to make amends? Miserable man! You think all who witnessed your secret marriage are dead? You mistake. But enough! Hark ye—if you disregard the order of that note,

you are blasted, at once. Obey, and you may, at least, be safe for a time. Cease. I care not to continue this conversation. Have me shown to my room."

With trembling hand, Forde pulled the bell-cord; and the man unlocked the door.

"Show—show this—gentleman to the third story back—room," to the servant girl who answered the summons.

She obeyed the order, her eyes widening, and mouth agape, as she conducted the disguised visitor up-stairs.

When the masked guest had closed the door of the room allotted to his use, he threw aside the mask, and removed his hat. Then we see that he is a fine specimen of manhood; strong, healthy, perhaps forty years of age, with smoothly-shaven face, regular features, and an eye of electric glance.

"Now," he mused, seating himself in a large, cushion-back chair, "I am satisfied of success. He dared not refuse me a room for the night. Poor, weak, superstitious fool! But a villain withal; though he is now tortured with repentance. Bertha will ascend to the library window at twelve. I will let her in. We will search the desk. The prize must be there! He checked himself in his speech awhile ago; but I am sure he would have said, 'I have a desk.' The Black Crescent and the certificate—these once found, and then, my poor, wronged Bertha, you shall be cleared of the foul slander which couples with your name in Richmond, and throw off the peniless garb put upon you by this wretch, whose superstition has well nigh ruined you. The curse and prophecy weigh heavily upon his mind."

Dwelling upon some plot which evidently absorbed his thoughts, he relapsed into silence, and sat awaiting the arrival of midnight.

But, whether the plan afoot was one of necessity or mere desire, there was a train of events pending which tended to destroy his calculations, and the beginning of it was, he fell asleep as he sat blinking at the coals in the grate.

The moments flew on. The stranger slumbered; though, had some invisible mouth whispered in his ear the coming result of his lack-vigil, a flash of lightning would not have been quicker, more sudden, than his return to wakefulness.

Harnden Forde was alone—miserable and mind-racked, in mental torture.

Reseating himself at the table, he drew forth a document from an inner pocket, and, first making sure he was alone, began to read.

And this is what he read:

"MR. HARNDEN FORDE:—"

"As you have given me to understand, so emphatically, that my suit for Eola's hand is useless, I propose to convince you that I am not so easily put off. To do this I will use two things: one, a name—Bertha Blake; the other, a date—Dec. 20th, 1863. Of the first, I know all. Of the second, I hold the paper itself, and can summon a witness. More: do you remember the curse?—the prophecy? If you do, then beware! Austin Burns is the son of Bertha Blake—born, 1840! When he shall marry Eola Blake, the prophecy is out, and the curse is to be fulfilled! But the marriage must not be. Avert the calamity by forcing her to become my wife. I shall call day after to-morrow, to dine. See that you press my suit on that occasion. Austin Burns calls to see Eola to-morrow evening. If they meet, see that you order him from the house, without giving him opportunity to question you. Moreover, impress upon Eola's mind that she can never become the wife of Austin Burns. Disobey me, if you dare."

"Your ob't serv't,"

"HAROLD HAXON."

"This—I received—yesterday," he murmured, brokenly, and shivering as with an ague. "I am in his power. He knows all, and a word from him—God! I had fondly hoped to see Austin lead my child to the altar. But I must obey Haxon! I must! Yet how can I? Now this one!"

His fingers twitched nervously as he opened and read the note brought him by the masked visitor.

It ran thus:

"HARNDEN FORDE:—I am watching you. One word from me, and your shame is inevitable. The stolen record is in my possession. There is a witness yet alive. The lawyer, your former tool, still lives, and is my ally. To the point: a young man, named Austin Burns, is the accepted lover of your child, Eola. I command you, do not hinder their union. Obey me."

"And this—this from—who can he be? Between these two, merciful Heaven! what course is left me? How willingly would I obey this last note? I have already answered! I dare not refuse! But the two orders differently. Oh! would not Bertha, for Eola's sake, forgive me? But the *Crescent*! no!—no!—no! I can not part with that. I am given a respite. But such a respite! I can not bear shame, after these years of proud position and wealth! I thought Bertha was dead. But she is not. She is in this city, and she has borne the wound of a broken heart so long! Mad fool that I was, to love Louise Ternor! I shall be destroyed—ha!"

He had started from the chair, and was pacing the room, when he halted suddenly and began twisting his skinny fingers through his sparse locks, as he stared at the figured carpet. An idea had struck him.

"Yes; there is one escape"—casting a fearful glance about him, lest the listening walls should catch his husky utterances—"I am desperate! I am wild! A knife-blow! I could bear; but *shame*—never! never! and once exposed by either of these, I am blasted before the world! They must die—all!—all!—but, without a pause, and waving his hands before him, as if to shut out the horrible pinta of his excited brain, he conjured, he took two or three steps backward, and his voice sunk to a whisper as he added:

"No!—no!—no! *not murder!* Bertha Blake must be found. She said the lawyer was not dead! Thank Heaven!—my hands are cleared of that! Would the fiends had him at this moment, though! I'll go to Bertha. I'll beg, beseech, for Eola's sake—mercy! mercy, that I may obey Harold Haxon, and save myself from the curse! And her champion—she shall tell me where she is! I must not kill him! I shiver! How cold it must be outside!"

He restored the papers to his pocket, and turned to a decanter of brandy on a stand in one corner. Of the liquor he drank heavily, and then settled himself in a chair.

The silver bells of a tower clock, in the hall, had struck the half-hour between eleven and midnight, when, with teeth clenched upon the under lip, till the compressed flesh threatened to burst in cuts, he stole, like a gliding specter, from the parlor.

Proceeding to the kitchen, he provided himself with two ropes: one about three yards long—the other, near three feet. With

these, he ascended to the room in the third story.

The door of the apartment was not locked, and cautiously opening it, he peered in.

A grim smile overspread Harnden's sickly, pale face, as he perceived the man sitting motionless in the large chair, and by the sound of deep, regular respiration, which came to his ears, he knew that his strange guest slumbered.

On tip-toe, he entered. Gradually, and with the tread of a cat, he approached the unconscious man. Reaching his side, he stooped, to get a look at the face, and instantly a tremor seized his limbs, while through his brain flashed the two words:

"Her brother!"

The discovery appeared to cause him much perplexity. He drew back a step, as if undecided how to act. Within a second's flight, he added, suppressedly:

"He must die—no! no! no! not murder! But he must tell me where she is. Steady, nerves; steady. How I shake!"

Schooling his nerves to calmness, he gently placed the larger rope over the breast and arms of the sleeper, thence conveying it around to the back of the chair, where he knotted it firmly.

Next, with a quick, adroit movement, he threw the remaining rope, in a turn, around the neck of his captive, and cried, hissing:

"Wake up, Wat Blake! Wake up and meet your doom!"

The tone was of such earnestness as to seem like the voice of one who was indeed resolved upon murder.

With a guttural exclamation, a twitch of the muscles, Wat Blake aroused and essayed to release himself.

But the cords were strong. The turn at his neck was choking him. Harnden Forde's knees pressed firmly against his breast.

He could not speak; and, with eyes starting, and features alternately reddening and whitening under the torture of strangulation, he looked up into the fierce countenance that glowered over him.

For a moment, Forde slackened the tension of the rope, and cried:

"I know you, Wat Blake; though you were but a boy when I married your sister! So you were not lost in the mines, after all! I remember you well—"

"Will you explain that you are! Would you murder me?"

"Tell me where your sister is!"

"I shall not!"

"Your stubbornness will not save your life!" tightening the cord again.

"I care—no—not! Kill—I—me! My—death will be avenged—urg—g—g—"

He was strangling.

"I can not kill him!" flashed through Forde's mind; but he was determined to wring the desired information from his enemy, and, partially maddened by a contemplation of his situation—between two fires, the flames of both threatening to lap him up in rude tongues of shame—he twisted his fingers round the ends of the rope, and pulled, till Blake's eyes rolled upward, and his whole powerful frame was convulsed in a struggle for breath.

"Tell me! Tell me!" he muttered, between gritting teeth, fearing that he was to fall in his desperate means to procure information. "Tell me—quick! You are dying!"

A relaxation of struggle, a fast-flashing gaze, was all the answer he received.

Suddenly Forde was dealt a blow upon the head, which felled him, senseless, to the floor.

When he recovered, Wat Blake had disappeared, and a stout cane, which lay beside him, told with what the unexpected blow had been delivered.

The gas-jet was extinguished; but by the dim light shed from the glowing grate, he saw a figure in the doorway.

Hurriedly regaining his feet, he advanced and was confronted by Eola!

(To be continued.)

CHAPTER XII.

THE FOUNDLING OF RAT ROW.

ROMNEY TAGGART was buried next day at Spring Grove. They made his grave in a part of the cemetery where the lots were cheap, and where there were more unkempt graves than monuments.

Mrs. Taggart would like to have had the body interred on the summit of a little knoll close to the chapel, but such lots were very expensive at Spring Grove, and so she had to content herself with the spot her slender means could purchase.

"It'll be a nice 'nuff place one of these days," said the old sexton, "when the new walks are laid out; an' if yer don't think a dollar too dear, I wouldn't mind plantin' some sprigs of flowers there."

No, she did not think it dear at all, and the money was paid promptly. The next day there was a coating of emerald turf on Romney's grave, and a little rosebush served the double purpose of a distinguishing mark and an ornament.

Van Taggart and his poor, heart-sick mother felt very lonely when they sat down that evening to their cheerless supper. They had often at their meals alone during little Romney's illness, but they had never felt his absence until now, and when Mrs. Taggart noticed that through sheer force of habit she had placed three plates on the table, and that Van was looking at the third one with tears in his eyes, she never said a word, but slyly slipped it away again and bent over the black cooking-stove a long while.

After they had swallowed a few mouthfuls, Mrs. Taggart broke the silence by remarking what a nice place Mill Creek Valley was, and Van, seeming to know that his mother was striving to keep from a painful subject, answered that it was a very beautiful place; then each stared into the face of the other, and Mrs. Taggart finally covered hers with her hands and fell to weeping. One might have supposed from what had been said that she was crying about the beauty of Mill Creek Valley; but she was not, and Van knew she was crying because there was no need of a third plate, and in all likelihood, never would be again.

She sat by the fire and wept for many weary hours, and finally Van crept over and laid his curly head in his mother's lap and slept uneasily, for a long time.

When the city clocks tolled three Mrs. Taggart awoke the boy and bid him prepare for bed.

While he was praying in one corner, she proceeded to clear away the pile of drugs on the table, throwing some of them out of the window, and putting some carefully away in a small closet.

"Kiss me, ma," said Van, rising from his knees.

She stooped down, kissed him tenderly, and was about to kneel down herself, when a faint cry, like that of an infant, startled her.

"What is that?" she asked, looking at Van, and trembling visibly. She was a very timid woman.

"One boy never can make nice music," said Romney, after a pause, "an' if I was you, Van, I'd get another boy."

"Don't talk that way, Romney, darling," said Mrs. Taggart, trying to conceal her emotion. "Don't you see you are making your poor little brother cry?"

"Well, I won't talk any more, ma," answered Romney, closing his eyes wearily, and laying one little wasted hand caressingly on his brother's head.

Neither Van nor his mother slept that night. The invalid was restless, and only closed his eyes for a few moments at a time, and was always wide awake when the hour for taking his medicine came about. Toward the close of the next day, he began to shiver rapidly; his face assumed a pinched appearance; his nose becoming very sharp and pointed indeed; and he could not sit up, even in his mother's arms, for a longer period than five minutes.

Strange enough, he was eager to talk, although every word that passed his lips cost him considerable effort, and pained him some. His mother saw this, and she said, gently:

"Romney, darling, you are talking too much."

He opened his large, bright eyes wide, and looked up into her face before he spoke. Then he said, in a grave, quiet way:

"I don't know," replied the boy; "it sounds like a baby, don't it?"

"Very like," was the response; "but it's at our door."

"I'll go and look," he said; and he did. In an instant he returned with Elinor Gregg's child in his arms.

"Oh, see," he exclaimed, "God has sent us this baby in place of our little Romney."

It was a beautiful baby—fat, rosy, and with large, wondering blue eyes, and Sarah Taggart clasped it in her arms and kissed its velvet cheek a dozen times before she spoke.

"Shall we keep it, mamma?" asked Van, after a while.

"No, dear, it would be too much trouble and we have not the means," she replied.

"But I will work for it; so hard," pleaded Van, "and when I come home I'll mind it all the time—so I will."

She could not resist that appeal, and there was, too, a void in her heart that this little waif could help to fill, she thought.

"What is its name, I wonder?" said Mrs. Taggart, after examining the emerald necklace carefully. "I can see no name on any thing."

She had scarcely uttered these words when her thumb, pressing against the largest stone, touched a spring, and the great jewel divided in equal halves, revealing a beautiful, girlish face in miniature, and engraved beneath it, the single word, "Elinor."

"Elinor! ain't it, ma?" said Van, after spelling slowly the inscription.

"Yes, that's its mother's name, I suppose."

"But, we won't call it Elinor, will we, ma?"

"Why not?"

"Well, because it is too big and proud a name for a little baby. Don't you think so?"

"Yes," Mrs. Taggart thought so; "but, what will we call it?"

Van paused and looked at the ceiling an instant; then his face lighted up, and he said:

"Let's call it Romney, ma. Oh, let's call it Romney."

"But it's a girl, my boy; and it wouldn't do to call a girl Romney. At least it wouldn't sound well, I think."

Van thought it would make no difference; and seemed so very much disappointed that his kind mother finally said: "Well, Van, you can have your own way in this. She is your own protegee, and you may call her what you please."

"Then I will call her Romney Taggart," he said, kissing the wee scarlet mouth in an exceedingly awkward, boyish way.

The little stranger did not relish the caress, for she drew down her brow until her face was a mere mass of purple wrinkles, in one of which her eyes were completely hid, and fell to crying like a vixen.

"Did I hurt her, ma?" asked the boy, a trifle vexed.

"No, my son, but little baby girls are very tender, I suppose."

"More'n boys?"

"A great deal more, I think."

Van Taggart remembered that for a long time, and during the first two years of Miss Romney Taggart's life he was very cautious when taking her on his knee that she was not hurt through his rudeness. Miss Romney had a very tender nurse, indeed.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

REMOUSE.

CHAUNCEY WATTEASON was very much distressed when he learned of Elinor's sudden disappearance, and this distress was heightened a fortnight after when he read in the newspapers that a woman answering Elinor's description in every particular had been found floating in the Ohio, below North Bend. The body had been taken to Lawrenceburg for interment, but the news reaching the ears of poor old Adam Gregg, he had the remains of his daughter taken to Butler county, and placed in the village graveyard, close beside the church in which Elinor Gregg had often worshiped when a child.

Chauncey Watteason was not wholly bad. He had been educated in a wicked school, and his training slanted his natural good traits with a coating of false philosophy and worldliness, but, beneath this slime, there was a man's heart—a little willful and stubborn, but tender, too.

The knowledge that he had driven Elinor Gregg to suicide preyed upon his mind night and day. He could not think of any thing else for weeks and months, and some of his friends twitted him on becoming melancholy because of his approaching marriage with Grace Alward.

Even the latter noticed how gloomy and abstracted he was growing, and one day, when they were alone in the sumptuous reception-room of the Alward mansion, she said:

"Chauncey, I fear you are not going to make a good husband at all."

"He looked up, astonished, and asked: 'Why, Grace?'"

"She pouted, as spoiled beauties are apt to do when men vex them, and said:

"Well, you are so gloomy at times, and I believe these times are increasing and last longer than they used to do. With our wedding day so near at hand, we should have more smiles."

"I will try to please you in that," he replied, pulling a rose-bud to pieces, "but I have had some business troubles, and I can not control my uneasiness at all times."

"Then tell me the cause of your trouble," she said, with a pretty, girlish animation, "and I will either dissipate it altogether or help you to bear it."

He then shook his head and answered: "No, it is bad enough for me to suffer, but you shall not."

A very soft light came into her face, and her eyes, which had been full of sunshine an instant before, now sought the carpet, full of shadows.

"You are not angry, Grace?" he asked, pleadingly.

"Yes, I am," she replied, hiding her face with the end of her scarf.

"And why are you angry?"

"Because you don't consider me fit to become your wife."

"But I do," he said, surprised.

"Well, then, why don't you tell me what troubles you so? I'm sure I could keep your secret, and if you think I could not, or that it would be dangerous to intrust me with it, why, then, I'm not the woman you should marry."

This was spoken in a grave, serious tone—a tone that surprised Chauncey Watteason a good deal, and for the first time in his life he realized that Grace Alward was not merely a bright, silly, pleasant girl whom he could deceive very easily and on whom reason would be wasted.

He saw, now, that he would have to employ different tactics, and so he said:

"Gracie, my own, you are right, and I will tell you every thing."

Her face lighted up again, and she put up her lips, and he kissed them.

"You see, I have been very wild," he began, "and have done a good many things which you would think doubtless very bad."

"But, you won't do so any more—will you?" she interrupted.

"God helping me, I hope not," he replied, solemnly; "but I have spent a great deal of money and am in debt some."

"I will lend you the money to pay," she said, eagerly.

He put up his hand. "Oh, no, Grace, I'm not so bad as that. I have plenty to pay my debts, and a slight margin of sixty or seventy thousand left."

They talked a long while, and when they parted it was with the understanding that their marriage should be postponed until December in order to permit him to arrange all his affairs with a view to a lengthy absence in Europe.

Chauncey had now five months of a respite in which to ponder over his great crime, and nurse the arrow of remorse which rankled in his breast.

"Had I my life to live over again," he frequently exclaimed to himself, "Elinor Gregg would now be my wife instead of sleeping in the dishonored grave of a suicide."

But these regrets were vain, and keenly he felt this to be true. But his remorse made him sentimental, and one day, late in October, he wandered into the Dellville graveyard.

The trees were weeping tears of blood upon the long, faded and tangled grass, which almost obscured the graves, and the setting sun was turning the dew that hung upon the flowers into purest, sparkling crystal.

Two boys, playing hide and seek among the tombstones, stopped their play as they saw the moody man stalk by, and when he sat down and looked curiously about him, they gave up their frolic, and stole away to their homes.

The old sexton, however, coming out of the church, noticed the stranger, and bowed politely to him.

"Can you tell me where Elinor Gregg is buried?" asked Chauncey.

The old man took off his hat, produced a red bandana, and after wiping his purple forehead, said, very deliberately:

"Yes, sir; I can show you the spot."

"Would you be kind enough to do so?"

The sexton eyed Chauncey from underneath his shaggy eyebrows an instant, and said:

"Yes, sir, I'll do that—and gladly, too, 'cause Elinor, poor girl, was good at heart, though somewhat unfortunate. But, sir, this is a world of deceit and wickedness, and none of us as is raising children know what will become of them before they die yet."

Chauncey agreed with the old man, and, in reply to one of his questions, said:

"No, I'm no relative. I knew her once—a long while ago."

"This is the place, then," said the sexton, pausing before a little mound over which the grass grew very green and healthy.

"Why, there is no tombstone!" exclaimed Chauncey, after a silent survey.

"No," replied the sexton. "Adam Gregg was at a good penny of expense to bring her all the way from Lawrenceburg, and he couldn't afford a tombstone just yet, I guess."

"You can leave me here. I'll remain awhile," said Chauncey, seating himself on a flat tombstone close by Elinor Gregg's grave.

The sexton obeyed, and when he had disappeared from sight, the young man fell upon the small grave and wept like a child—weep for poor Elinor Gregg—for her child and his, which he thought was lying stark and dead in the big river—and wept for himself, too, whose evil deeds were now bearing Dead Sea fruit, full of gall-like bitterness.

The sun settled down into billows of golden splendor, and the moon arose, pale, bright and radiant, and still Chauncey Watteason knelt in the wet grass.

He felt very weak and dizzy when he stood up at last, and said to the senseless sod which covered Elinor Gregg, "Farewell, forever!"

He staggered like a drunken man from the spot, and three weeks after, to the surprise of everybody, a tall, stately marble monument lifted its form from out the grass of Elinor's grave, and on a tablet in the center the sexton shaded his eyes and read:

SACRED TO THE MEMORY
OF
ELINOR GREGG,
Aged 19 years.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 77.)

Overland Kit:

THE IDYL OF WHITE PINE.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,
AUTHOR OF "WITCHES OF NEW YORK," "WOLF
DEMON," "WHITE WITCH," ETC.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE JUDGE "PUTS UP" THE CARDS.

The Judge stood just within the doorway, a look of blank amazement upon his face. The others gazed into the room, and then they, too, cried out in astonishment.

The body of Gains Tendall was gone!

There was the bed, the blanket spotted with the blood that had welled from the wounds of the stricken man, showing plainly where the body had lain, but the body itself had disappeared.

The room was a small one, lit by a single window. At a glance the eyes saw all that it contained. The window was closed.

"What has become of the body?" cried the Judge, in amazement.

"Durned if I know!" replied Bill, in utter astonishment.

"You kept watch of the door, Rennet?" the Judge asked.

"Yes; we've not taken our eyes from it," the young man answered. "A mouse couldn't have got out without our seeing it, let alone a human."

"I'll swear that neither hide nor hair has come out of this since you went away, Judge!" affirmed the driver.

"Some one must have removed the body through the window, then," Jones said, a dark look upon his face. He stepped to the casement and opened it.

The window looked out upon a small

shed. The Judge saw at a glance how easy it was for any one to ascend to the roof of the shed from the ground, and thus gain access to the room.

"I can not understand this," he muttered, in an undertone, communing with himself.

"What can be the motive for this strange movement? Some one is dealing me a blow in the dark. I must be on my guard or else—"

Then the Judge paused in his muttered speech as Rennet advanced to his side and looked out of the window.

"I guess the idea," Rennet said, in the ear of the Judge. "Some accomplice of the girl has removed the body by means of this window so as to destroy the proof against her."

"Yes, it looks like it," the Judge replied, slowly and thoughtfully.

"But it does not make any difference; we are not going to act according to the precise forms of law here. Both Bill and myself can swear that we saw the man dead. I think that our evidence will be enough to convince any one of the death of the man, even if we can not produce the body, or tell what has become of it."

"In my mind, the fact of the body being spirited away, is strong evidence of the girl's guilt," Jones said, with a covert glance into the face of the other.

"Yes, it is so."

"I think that I had better search her room; there may be able to secure some proof regarding this terrible deed."

"That is the proper course, Judge, and I will assist you," the Judge said, slowly.

Judge Jones seemed strangely ill at ease. The two then went into Jimmie's room, Jones bidding Haynes remain with the prisoner in the entry.

A long breath came from Judge Jones' lips as he entered the little apartment. It was plainly but neatly furnished.

"About the bloody knife?" the Judge asked.

"I secured it last night; Bill has it now," Rennet answered. "I did not wish to rouse the girl's suspicions that we thought she was concerned in the murder, so I told her that I would take charge of the body, and that she could go to bed and not bother herself about it."

"And as the Judge spoke, his eyes fell upon the blood-stained apron that Jimmie had worn on the preceding evening."

"More proof," he said.

A little trunk stood in one corner. It was unlocked, and Rennet opened it. He pulled the clothes out carefully; as he did so, a folded sheet of note paper fluttered to the ground. The Judge snatched it up eagerly.

As he opened it a peculiar expression flashed across his cold face; and a fierce light burned in his cold eyes.

"This establishes the motive for the deed," he said, quickly; then folded the letter and placed it inside his pocket-book with some other papers and returned the book to the breast-pocket of his coat. Stay!" he said, after a moment's thought. "You had better write your name on the back of the paper so that you can swear to it, when produced in evidence."

Then the Judge took out the pocket-book and saw a long one such as are usually carried by business men, and contained quite a number of folded papers similar to the one that had come from the folds of Jimmie's garments. The Judge took out the folded sheet that he had placed on top of the others, and Rennet wrote his name in pencil on it.

"There, now; we will be able to prove conclusively that it came from the trunk of the girl," the Judge said, and he half-folded the paper as he spoke. "Just see what terrible evidence it is against her!"

Rennet glanced at the last few words written on the paper and nodded assent.

They went on with the search; but, nothing else was found that seemed to have any relation to the murder. Satisfied, at length, the two gave over the search and rejoined the party in the entry.

Jimmie had not spoken a word. She had waited calmly and quietly. Haynes, who had watched the girl attentively, was somewhat puzzled, and still thinking that she was either totally innocent of all knowledge of the crime or else she had more than common courage.

The party went down-stairs; the pickets were called in; Jimmie was placed in the center of the armed men, and the line of march taken up for the express office.

The astonishment of the man-from-Red-Dog when he saw that Jimmie was the criminal whom he had volunteered to arrest, was extremely great.

"She! that girl the crifter? Twenty of us galoots, armed tooth and nail, fur to arrest one female! I reckon I'll sell out my share in this hyer billin' cheap. Ain't felt so mean since the Digger Injuns stole my mule!" he muttered, in disgust.

The proceeding in the Eldorado had taken up some little time, and it was broad daylight when the party, bearing Jimmie as a prisoner in their midst, marched through the street.

Great was the astonishment of the inhabitants of the mining camp, who, of course, were ignorant of the terrible deed done under cover of the night, when they saw the little procession.

The news of the arrest of Jimmie for the murder of Gains Tendall ran like wildfire through the town. Those who were up and saw the arrest, made it their business to wake up those who were asleep and tell them the news. Swift horses, ridden by reckless riders, bore the news to Gopher Gulch, Paddy's Flat and the other outlying regions around Spur City as a center.

To do justice to the inhabitants of the mining camp, it is necessary to remark that almost to a man they "haw-hawed" at the idea of Eldorado Jimmie committing murder. Popular sentiment was strongly in her favor, and some even went so far as to call Judge Jones a "durned old fool!"

The miners came pouring into town. Whisky was at a premium and the saloon-keepers were jubilant. The Eldorado, alone, of all the places of public entertainment in Spur City, did not share in the general bustle. The doors were tightly closed and the silliness of death reigned within. The Chinese, Ah Ling, had disappeared. The adventurous seekers after knowledge, who had penetrated into the house, urged onward by the morbid curiosity peculiar to the masses to gaze on the scene of a bloody deed, found all the doors locked and Dick Talbot in possession of the premises.

Talbot had been hunted up by the man-from-Red-Dog night after the arrest.

Injun Dick said very little in regard to the affair; and when asked his opinion as to Jimmie's innocence or guilt, merely smiled

quietly, and asked the questioners if they thought that the Reese would ever run backward. It was plain that Dick did not feel at all alarmed.

Old Mr. Rennet awakened Bernice at an early hour, and told her of the terrible murder that had been committed, and the accusation brought against the girlish landlady of the Eldorado.

"They've carried her off and are going to try her before that remarkable specimen of a judge who runs the machine in this delectable region," he said, in conclusion.

"The landlady of this first-class hotel is in 'duress vile,'" the Chinaman cook has taken it into his head to abscond, so that we shall have to look after our provender, to-day, ourselves; but, you needn't be alarmed, my dear; I've been on a foraging tour already. I've secured six boxes of sardines and a choice assortment of oyster, canned salmon, lobster, etc., and four pounds of crackers, so that we are not likely to starve."

And the old lawyer chuckled at his forethought.

"When is the girl to be tried?" Bernice asked, a thoughtful expression on her face.

"Some time this morning."

"Do you suppose that she has a lawyer to defend her?"

"A lawyer! what, in this region?" old Rennet asked, in comic astonishment. "Oh, no; unless it's some one like myself on a wild-goose chase. The law here, my dear, lies in a revolver, and the quickest man on the trigger is the ablest practitioner."

"Mr. Rennet, won't you speak for her?" asked Bernice, quickly, laying her hand pleadingly on the lawyer's arm.

"What! you want to get me into another law suit? I've already pleaded and won one case for you."

"Oh, Mr. Rennet, you can not guess how much I am interested in this girl!" Bernice exclaimed, earnestly. "She must be saved; the happiness of one that I love depends upon her. For his sake, she must be saved!"

"His sake! who?" asked the old lawyer, in a maze.

"I can not explain that," Bernice replied, in confusion; "I can not explain to you the motives that actuate me; but, she must be saved," she repeated, earnestly.

"All right. I've only got one fault—I never could refuse a woman any thing. I'll go for this one-horse judge again!" cried old Rennet, excitedly.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE ACCUSATION.

It was after nine o'clock before the court assembled to try Jimmie Johnson for the murder of the miner, Gains Tendall.

The express office had been selected as the place of trial.

Of course it was crowded to suffocation. Judge Jones presided. The jury, twelve good men and true, were seated on a rudely constructed seat by the wall. A strong guard of well-armed men kept back the crowd.

All the noted men of Spur City were there—Dick Talbot, the man-from-Red-Dog, Billy Brown, the landlord of the Cosmopolitan, Dave Reed from Gopher Gulch, Yellow Jim of Paddy's Flat, and many others well known to fame.

Old Rennet had managed to squeeze in close to the line of men who kept back the spectators.

Judge Jones opened the court with a brief speech.

"Fellow citizens," he said, "we are assembled here, to-day, for a very important purpose. Last night, one of our townsmen was brutally murdered in the Eldorado Hotel. The prisoner, known to you all as Jimmie Johnson, stands accused of committing this murder. It behooves us for the reputation of our town to discover and punish the doer of the deed. Miss Johnson, are you guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty," replied Jimmie, firmly.

"Why should I harm him? I never had any grudge against him."

"I'll bet a mule agin a yaller pup she didn't do it!" howled the man-from-Red-Dog.

The Judge paid no attention to the interruption.

"The court will now proceed to examine the witnesses," Jones said. "As the prisoner has no one to speak for her, I will see that she has full justice done her."

"I beg your pardon, sir; I stand ready to act as counsel for the prisoner!" exclaimed old Rennet, striving to push through the line of men, who resisted the attempt.

"If you don't let the old fat cuss through, I'll climb all over you!" cried the Red-Dog, shoving back the stalwart fellow who opposed Rennet's progress.

"What!" cried the guard, in rage, leveling his revolver full in the face of Jim.

"Say, you pint that we've on me, there'll be a first-class funeral round hyer tomorrow, an' you'll ride in the first carriage!" cried the man-from-Red-Dog, defiantly.

There was a lively prospect of a row for a few minutes, but Talbot and a few others got between the angry guard and the redoubtable Red-Dog man, and succeeded in calming the disturbance.

Rennet passed through the guards, and took a position by the side of the prisoner while the commotion was going on.

"Don't be afraid, my girl," he said, encouragingly; "you're not without friends."

A grateful look from Jimmie rewarded him for his words.

Judge Jones surveyed the old lawyer with a peculiar expression in his stern eyes; it seemed to be one of scornful defiance.

The troubled waters were calmed down, and the trial proceeded.

The first witness called was James Rennet. He gave a clear account of the discovery of the body, of knocking at the door of Jimmie, and of the discovery of the girl with the bloody knife in her hand.

"I found it on the floor, and took it up to look at it," cried Jimmie, interrupting the evidence.

"Hush, my dear," said the old lawyer.

Young Rennet then told of his summoning Judge Jones, and of the events that followed.

Ginger Bill, the driver, then gave his evidence, which differed but little from that of Rennet. The only important point was that it indicated the time when the murder must have been committed.

Old Rennet put a few unimportant questions to the two witnesses; they chiefly related to the appearance of the murdered man when discovered by them.

"You see, gentlemen of the jury, the way the evidence tends," the Judge said. "They put the miner, Tendall, to bed, and about an hour afterward, found him weltering in his gore; then, on knocking at the door of

the prisoner's room, the door flies open, and the prisoner is discovered with a bloody Bowie-knife in her hand, and some portions of her dress stained with blood."

The Judge then produced the apron, which showed the blood-spots plainly on its white surface.

"Gentlemen of the jury," said the old lawyer, in his bland, oily way, "as the proceedings in this court are not conducted according to regular rules, I propose that we let Miss Jimmie tell her own story about this bloody knife and the spots of blood upon her garments. We are after the truth, and, of course, it doesn't much matter how we get at it, as long as we do get at it. I have too much faith in the manhood of the free American citizens here on the frontier, the pioneers of civilization, bearing the starry banner of our great republic amid hostile foes, to doubt but what they will do full justice to a young and helpless woman, especially when her life and death hang on their acts!"

And after this little Fourth-of-Julyism—this fragment of the "stump," Rennet looked around and smiled benignantly. The little hum of approval that arose told that his shot had struck home.

"Now, my dear, give us your account of this affair," continued the old lawyer, addressing the girl.

"Yes, sir," Jimmie said, in a clear voice, and without a trace of embarrassment in her manner. "After I went up the saloon, I went up-stairs to my room. I knew that there was a candle there, so I didn't carry one up with me, only some matches. I lit the candle, and it took me a few minutes, because I couldn't make the matches burn that I had with me; so I had to hunt for some that were in the room. After I lit the candle, I turned round to fasten the door and then I saw the Bowie-knife covered with blood, lying on the floor. From the place it was lying, I judged that some one had opened the door in the dark and thrown it in. That was what I thought the moment I saw it. I picked it up and some of the blood dripped off on my dress, and just then the door flew open, and I saw Mr. Rennet and Bill. When they told me that Gay was murdered, I guessed instantly that he had been killed by the knife that I held in my hand. Of course I felt faint just a bit, though I ain't one of the fainting kind."

All within the room had listened attentively to the girl's words, and few there but believed that she spoke the truth.

Old Rennet looked around with an air of triumph.

"You see, gentlemen of the jury, how clear, how lucid is the young lady's statement. It carries conviction on the face of it. See how plain it is that the murderer, after committing the deed of blood, was naturally anxious to get rid of the bloody instrument, and opening the first door that came handy, cast in the crimson-stained knife. And again, I put it to you, gentlemen of the jury, as sensible and intelligent men, is it natural for any one to commit such a cold-blooded, coolly-calculated murder, as this deed of blood must have been, and then allow himself or herself to be surprised with the very weapon of death, stained with the blood of the victim, in his or her hand? Of course not! It is utterly out of the question. The first impulse of the criminal is to remove all evidence implicating him with the foul deed. And now we come to the strongest point of all. What motive had this girl to commit the deed? Weigh that question well! What difference could it possibly make to her whether Gains Tendall was in the world or out of it? That's the point!"

And Rennet paused and looked around him, as if to give time for all to consider his words.

"A man

TO MY LITTLE DARLING.

BY ARNOLD ISLER.

The moon is shining o'er us,
The stars are brightly gleaming;
The scene is fair before us,
Sweet love, with dark eyes beaming.

My arms fondly enfold thee,
With rapture to my bosom;
My eyes with joy behold thee,
My love, my pretty blossom!

My love of loves sincerest
From thee I never will sever;
False to thee? Never, dearest!
I must love thee forever!

And if e'er o'er my blossom
Dark clouds threaten and glover,
I'll take thee to my bosom
Till the angry storm is over.

I'll shield thee when in trouble,
From tongues that jolly prattle;
Though misfortunes round thee double,
I'll bravely for thee battle.

And when thy heart meets sadness,
And gloom around thee presses,
I'll win thee back to gladness
With kisses and caresses.

But, I hear the watch-dog snoring;
The old folks are behind us;
So kiss me good-night, darling;
I hardly think they'll find us.

In the Wilderness.

ILL—WADING THE RIFTS.

THERE was a buzz of preparation early next morning in the fishermen's camp. Rods were taken out and fitted; leaders, flies and lines inspected; reels put in order; while the old-fashioned fishermen of the party were out procuring bait. The woods were lovely to-day, vocal with the song of the early birds, and fresh and green under the glistening dew of the morning. White fleecy clouds sailed slowly across the breaks in the overhanging vista of branches, and the river made strange music as it rippled over the stones.

Viator was a spectacle for a lady's society as he appeared for the rift-fishing. He wore a pair of heavy boots which reached nearly to his thighs, impervious to water, yet lightly made in every part except the soles, which were nearly an inch thick and furnished with spikes like those of an Irish brogan. Upon his head was a huge broad-brimmed soft hat, stained and discolored by mud and water. His other garments, consisting of a rough "Jersey" and buckskin pants, evidently had seen hard service. Add to this a fish-basket and rod, and you have the fisherman complete.

Take his opposite, in the person of Augustus Bacon. He wore the approved fishing costume of the cities—tight pants, short coat—which made his long legs look longer still—gaiters, skull-cap, and straps, belts, and boxes without number. Old Ben grinned satirically at the sight, and was heard to mutter a fervent aspiration that he might come to grief. How well his expectations were realized, let the sequel show.

The rest of the party were equipped as they should have been, for they had taken lessons from experience. Augustus Bacon's was the only "fancy dress" of the party. "What you going to do with that livin' beast of prey?" roared Ben, in strong disgust, as he saw the stretch which the amateur fisherman was putting on—a gaudy salmon-fly, which no man who knew any thing about the business would have dreamed of using.

"I want a heavy fly for a stretch," said 'Gustus, looking up with a sickly grin. "Do you think it too small?"

"Too small! Look here; if you was going to fish for whales or hippopotamuses, you might need a fly as big as that. But, seeing you are arter rather smaller game, seems to me you might use a fly that didn't weigh a ton. See here; I'm going to do the fair thing by you. Now, don't you undertake to wade the rifts. But you just take my bait-box and wade along the bank, and wherever you see a likely place, you try 'em on. Like ez not, you'll strike suthin' if you have good luck."

"Ridiculous! I am going to fish where the rest do."

"Then go on. Only, if you hook that grapping-iron you've got on the end of your line into a tree, it's your own look-out, not mine. Come along, boys. Don't try to put your rods together until you get into the river."

They marched on in silence for half an hour, the bushes growing so thick upon the banks that they found it impossible to get to the river. 'Gustus began to look blue, and his sadness increased as he saw Ben part the thick bushes and reach the river-side, and, instead of stopping, walk into the water up to his knees, followed by the rest of the party, leaving him upon the bank.

"Where are you going, you fellows?" he gasped. "I can't do that, you know."

"Never know what you can do till you try it on hose," said Ben. "You kin lay the other side where the water is shallow. Spread out there, boys, and leave space enuff between you so that you won't get tangled up, and then give it to 'em!"

There was a rattling of reels, the clink of metal, and the rods were ready for use. Viator was quickest at the work, and before the others were ready, his hand, holding the lithe nine-ounce lancewood, was thrown back over his shoulder, and the brown cockles and *hairs* were lighted upon the water, twenty feet below. He was in the middle of the rift, where the water rose half-way to his thighs. Next to him was Scribbler, an old votary of hook and line, who left a place next him for 'Gustus, if he could pluck up courage to cross.

Viator let the light line float for a moment on the water, and then threw again. There was a little circle in the water where the fly lighted, and two or three bubbles rose to the surface. "Ah-ha, my lad!" muttered Viator. "You see it, do you? Let us try once more." Again the flies sailed through the air and dropped lightly on the water, and the next moment the lithe rod doubled in the strong hand of the fisherman, and the shrill music of the reel was heard as the line spun out through the rings, and, a moment after, a noble fish breached from the current with erected fins and dilated gills, struggling to shake the strong tackle from his mouth. Down he went into a deep pool, and Viator gave him the butt, and began to reel in slowly, for the fish was a good one, and full of spirit.

The pose of a skillful fisherman is beautiful. He stands with one hand holding the rod just above the reel, his other hand grasping the reel and working it according to the nature of the fish he has hooked, his watchful eye upon the water, where, from time to time, the struggling trout appears. The fight is soon over, and, with a shout of

victory, the elated fisherman scoops up his first prize and deposits it in the basket, and prepares his cast again.

By this time the others are at work, and each has hooked a fish, and even Spencer, under the watchful care of old Ben, has succeeded in taking in a fish weighing nearly half a pound. 'Gustus is prancing wildly up and down the bank, shouting to his companions to know if it is "very cold," and lamenting his untired gaiters. At length his desire to distinguish himself got the better of his fear of the water, and in he went. The spring cold water sent a chill to his bones, but he advanced bravely, until, stepping on a slippery stone, he displayed the heels of his gaiters to the admiring gaze of his friends, while his head disappeared beneath the tide. There was a confused spluttering in the water, and 'Gustus sat up, woefully demoralized and disgusted with rift-fishing.

"That," said Ben, as he landed a large trout and deposited it in his basket. "You can't get any wetter, that's one comfort; so you may as well pick yourself up and git to work."

'Gustus complied ruefully, but his confidence, as well as his person, was sadly dampened. He took his station next to Scribbler, and made that unfortunate man's life a burden to him for some moments. That salmon fly took such strange and erratic pilgrimages through the air that it is no wonder that Scribbler was in dread of what might happen to him. By that fatality which always attends unskillful fishing, one of the fathers of the trout family took a fancy to one of the flies which 'Gustus cast upon the waters. Whizz! The line rung the reel, and 'Gus started off like a race horse, the water splashing prodigiously as he rushed. "I'll be dog-goned if he ain't hooked a big 'un," roared Ben. "Hi! Straighten up on him afore he tows you ashore!"

'Gustus "straightened up on him"—in other words, attempted to throw him over his head. But, unfortunately, the fish was heavier than he thought; the tip broke short off, and away went the big fish, carrying with him those dreadful flies and six feet of leader. So suddenly was the strain taken off that 'Gustus toppled backward, and went down with a resounding splash. When he once more regained his perpendicular, he picked up the pieces of his rod and made for the shore, unheeding the invitations of Ben to "try it on ag'in."

The rest of the party kept on down the rifts, doing fearful havoc among the finny tribes. Now and then one or two of the party went down, but he rose again with unshaken courage, repaired whatever damage had been done, and kept on. The fish baskets began to weigh heavy upon them, and about noon they reached the foot of the rift, and landed. The old guide built up a fire, and before half an hour had passed they were discussing the merits of a trout dinner, making the air vocal with their laughter. The first fish was hardly off the coals when they were joined by 'Gustus, carrying quite a string of fish, which he had caught with bait and hook from the deep pools along the shore.

He was not in good humor, for the success of his companions, in rift fishing, had somewhat angered him. A visitation to his "pocket-pistol," a pound of well cooked trout, and a cup of excellent coffee, together with a promise from Viator to lend him a fishing rig, put him in better humor. He fished from the bank for the rest of the day, and came back with the party at night, boasting of the great things he would do next day, when once made master of Viator's clothing. And they went to rest, satisfied that he would do great deeds in the next day's fishing.

Helen's Wedding Present.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

"It's just the most provoking thing I ever knew! Why couldn't they have staid home, I'd like to know, at this particular time? And the St. Lawrences all coming to-night, too!"

Isadore Hemingway's face wore the most angry of frowns, and she tapped her foot against the gleaming fender, with a gesture that betokened how vexed she was.

It is a little trying, I admit, Isadore, especially when I remember how very proud and disdainful the St. Lawrences are, and how overpoweringly confidential and familiar dear old aunt Hetty is apt to be.

"Dear old aunt Hetty!" Isadore retorted, scornfully. "Why, Helen Hemingway, where has your common sense gone?"

But Nellie laughed good-naturedly; she had grown accustomed to her sister's ways. "To be sure I love aunt Hetty, and uncle Amasa too; and if your gratitude was of a stronger type, you, Isadore, would never forget that dreadful summer we both were down with the typhoid fever at Beach Nest, and dear old auntie nursed us through, when our own mother was afraid to come near us."

There came a faint flush to Isadore's cheeks at Nell's earnest, almost reproachfully indignant words.

"Of course I have always been grateful, Nell; and you know I gave aunt Hetty a new black silk dress."

"And I can tell you she'd far more prize a kind welcome and a loving kiss. I shall make her as happy as I can while she is here, the wedding and the St. Lawrences notwithstanding."

Nell tossed her brown curls and then went on with her reading. Suddenly Isadore glanced up and spoke:

"Helen, I wonder if Dr. Will Greyson will come with them?"

Then the rich, guilty flushes sprung all over Nell's sweet face, surging to the very collar around her white, shapely throat.

"Dr. Greyson? Why should he? You don't suppose he has remembered us, do you, you goose?"

"Perhaps not us, Nell; but I certainly think he remembers you. You needn't look so deliciously ill at ease. I know how you like him, and I don't wonder, for he is the most noble man I ever saw."

"You say that, and to be married to Harry St. Lawrence to-morrow!"

Then there came a little quiver around Isadore's perfect mouth; a faint grayness that lingered for a moment around her lips.

"Helen, may I confide my secret to you? Nell, Nell, my sister, I am going to take false vows upon myself when I shall promise to love Harry St. Lawrence! And didn't you know, didn't you guess it is he—that grave young physician—I am loving?"

She buried her face in her hands, and He-

len, with a white agony on her face, sat mute with amaze.

Ah, that was a bitter moment to Nell Hemingway when she heard her sister declare her love for a man her own heart was worshipping! But, she only sat, suffering silently, and with thankful that Dr. Greyson himself was in blissful ignorance of the unfortunate love given him. Then she laid her hand on her sister's head.

"It may be strange advice, Isadore, and which arises from the suddenness of the knowledge that you do not care for your betrothed husband, but I tell you to do as I would do myself; if you do not love Mr. St. Lawrence, do not marry him. If you love Dr. Greyson, win him, if you can."

It had taken an effort to speak these words; but Isadore only shook her head wearily.

"No, there is no time now. To-morrow I shall be Mrs. St. Lawrence, and you must give me Dr. Greyson for my brother. Forgive me for telling you my story, sister Nell; let us forget it as soon as we can. Now, shall we go down and see our country relations?"

And Nell wondered at the regained look of calm composure on Isadore's face.

"So we've come in time to see the wedding," eh, Isadore? I guess you didn't calculate on us, did you, now?"

Honest-hearted aunt Hetty had pressed sounding kisses on the girls' cheeks, and then turned to enjoy a little gossip with the bride-elect. But, Isadore was enmeshed in her invulnerable armor of frigidity.

"We certainly had not expected you. There are very few guests invited."

"Well, that's the better for me, seem' as how I only brought my black silk along. Amasa, where's them apples and walnuts Dr. Greyson put in the wagon when we started? That reminds me, he sent his love to you, Isadore—'not knowin', you see, that you was to be married, any more'n he did.'"

For a brief second the sisters' eyes met; Helen's full of sudden, anguished disappointment; Isadore's wearing a proud triumph that almost startled Nell.

Aunt Hetty went on, little thinking the havoc she was making.

"I feel kinder sorry for him, Isadore; I had an idea he thought purty considerable of one of you, but this morning when he mentioned your name particular, I see he never dreamed you'd be married so soon."

Isadore made some trifling answer, and then left the sitting-room for the silence of her own chamber.

Once alone, she paced the floor in restless agitation, her eyes hiding in their depths a half-desperate light; then she sat down by her writing-desk, and with cold, trembling fingers, wrote this:

"Harry, you will be insulted, indignant, and I know wounded when you read this note, written on the eve of the day upon which we were to be married; but, dear Harry, I can not bear to let you know that I do not love you; and, cruel though my task is to tell it, strangely incomprehensible as it will appear in the eyes of the world, I, to-night, declare our engagement at an end. Do not seek to see me; you can go to Helen; she will explain it all."

"Forgive me, if you can, for the wrong I have done you."

She dispatched the note by Mr. Hemingway's coachman, and then deliberately told the family, to their horror, of her positive intention not to be married.

While Nell sobbed herself to sleep, for sorrow that landlocked Will Greyson did not love her, Isadore dreamed of the days when she should be his bride.

Of course it was a nine day's talk, the suddenly broken-off match between Harry St. Lawrence and Isadore Hemingway. Some prophesied one reason, others another, while no one but Helen knew the reason.

Uncle Amasa, when the news had been told him, opened his eyes more widely than usual, then raised his shaggy brows, before he spoke.

"I think it is a wrong thing to do, niece Isadore, and I don't wonder the young man's broke up. So I s'pose the wedding present I'd calculated to give you won't be wanted now. Little Nell, I'm going to give it to you. 'Tain't much, but it's the best I can do."

He lifted a small book from his capacious pocket; a new, gaudily-bound volume, whose leaves were yet unused.

"It's poetry, Helen, all about love and the like. You'll not refuse it when your old uncle picked it out?"

A half-scornful smile was curling Isadore's lips, as the old man proffered the book to Helen. Helen saw the sneer, and the angry blushes spread to her cheeks.

"Will I take it, dear uncle? Indeed I will, and a thousand thanks for your kindness."

Isadore laughed at her sister's enthusiasm, and then bade her uncle and aunt good-by; adding, very consciously, that even though she might expect her down to the farm-house in the spring.

Aunt Hetty sighed after they were in their old-fashioned wagon.

"Isadore's a good girl, only so proud! but, Nell's the pride of the family. If it was only her Dr. Greyson was after!"

The cool evenings of May, balmy and moonlighted, had come; and the Misses Hemingway had been settled in the cozy, spacious farm-house, since the first crocuses of early April had bloomed in warm, sunny corners.

Those few weeks had their own history; a heart history, too, that recorded the love-life of Dr. Greyson and—not Isadore Hemingway, alas! poor Isadore! but Helen—pretty, modest Nell, who had not dared dream that the handsome young physician loved her; who had counseled haughtily Isadore to win him; who had even come to the country for Isadore's sake; had been asked by Dr. Will Greyson to be his wife!

It had all happened so naturally, so evenly, that Isadore herself was not surprised when, with eyes that she could not keep from filling with tears, she had listened to Nell's half-deprecating announcement.

Afterward, when Will had called her sister, and a little shiver had run over her frame, she grew more pensive than was her wont; then, day by day, Nell was rejoiced to see her spirits again returning.

It was in the very warmest July days, that word came to the quiet country house of a terrible illness in the St. Lawrence mansion; Harry was ill—dangerously ill, and the physicians said there had been some severe mental excitement to superinduce it.

And that cause Isadore knew was her cruel jilting of him at the very eleventh hour.

Then, with that same morose of sad news, came more; the banking-house of St. Lawrence and St. Lawrence had failed; and Harry was to earn his bread when he recovered, if ever he did.

Those were sad days for Isadore Hemingway; days wherein she learned, for the first time, the real, true feelings of her heart; when the romantic affection she had permitted to overgrow the pure love, faded to an ashamed insignificance beside the one thrilling fact that she had loved Harry St. Lawrence; and, what caused her equal pain and pleasure to know, she still loved him—all the more for his misfortune.

So proud Isadore Hemingway, with a heart grown gentle from suffering, sat herself down and wrote a letter to him—to Harry, and one to Harry's mother, in both of which she begged for the bliss of being Harry's wife, and Harry's mother's daughter.

Then she waited for her answer; wondering, when she saw Dr. Will Greyson and Nell so happy together, if joy was to come to her in the morning of hope, after the long, dark night of bitter weeping.

Then, one day, when the early hoar-frost lay white under the September sunrise, came to her a summons to enter the promised land; Harry had been made well by her sweet, humbly proud letter, and waited to call her his own; while Mrs. St. Lawrence sent her warmest kiss of love and choicest benediction.

"To be sure we will be poorer than we thought to be, Nell; but, what of that? Since these past, dreadful days, I have learned that all I want is Harry."

A bright smile—one that Isadore had often seen on Nell's face of late days—was creeping over Nell's features.

"Perhaps if you will accept a wedding present from me it may enable Harry to start where he left off."

"Preposterous, Nell! Why father himself does not own fifty thousand dollars; true, uncle Amasa might spare it, and twice as much. But, I never could ask it."

"Nor could I. Yet, despite your incredulity, Isadore, I am going to give you the charmed book of poems you refused once, when you were not so sweet and good as now."

She laid the little volume in Isadore's hand.

"But, what has this to do with what we are talking of?"

Then Nell put her arms around her sister's neck, and told her.

Each page has an hundred-dollar bill fastened to it. There are five hundred pages, Isadore! Uncle Amasa gives that amount to us both, dear sister, for our wedding portion."

The tears were streaming down Isadore's cheeks.

"I do not deserve this. Oh, Nell, I dare not think I am so blessed!"

"Beyond and above this blessing, Isadore, is the sweet, humble spirit you have fought for, and gained; and Harry can not help loving you more for it than he did. The day—well, don't let us talk of it! Let us take the first train to New York, and you shall tell the good news to Harry!"

Six months afterward, when both sisters were attired for their double wedding, and their elegant dresses bore testimony to uncle Amasa's generosity, it was with deepest joy Isadore looked out into her future, brightened by Helen's tender counsel and her own conquered weaknesses.

Bessie Raynor:
THE FACTORY GIRL.

A TALE OF THE LAWRENCE LOOMS.

BY DR. WM. MASON TURNER,
AUTHOR OF "COLLEGE RIVALRY," "MARKED MISTER,"
"FIFTY THOUSAND REWARDS," "THE MISSING FINGER," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXIV—CONTINUED.

"Bessie! Bessie!" wailed a voice upstairs.

"Yes, Ross, darling; I am coming, brother!" and she bounded up-stairs. A moment, and she was in the sufferer's room.

"I am here, Ross," she exclaimed, panting, as she stood by his bedside.

"Oh! Bessie! I am so glad to see you!" said the cripple, in a low voice of bodily anguish. "I am feverish, and when I heard you on the stairs long ago, I begged you for water, and—"

"Me, on the stairs? Why, Ross—"

"Yes, Bessie; you seemed to be at the old chest."

The girl started at the word chest, and stared fixedly at her brother. She had, for the time, forgotten about that chest, about the secret wealth it contained, about the tale her father had told her.

"Oh, Ross, forgive me!" she exclaimed. "I was not on the stairway. You have been dreaming. I saw that you were asleep, and I went out for awhile. Business of—"

"Not on the stairway! Dreaming!" and the poor fellow rubbed his eyes in a bewildered manner.

"Yes, Ross; you have been dreaming. You had better take the sleeping potion left by the doctor, for—"

"How do you know, Bessie, that I have been dreaming?" asked the boy, interrupting her.

"I know it, Ross, because you talk so singularly."

He opened his eyes, and looked toward his sister.

"I was dreaming, Bessie," he said, calmly—"dreaming that same dark dream! I saw the vision again. Ah! I forgot; I did not tell it to you. It was a black dream, sister. Listen! A dark winter night—clouds across the sky—great piles of smoke rushing high in the air—a terrible crackling and roaring noise, sounding far and wide—only a few stars peeping from the black sky! A crippled boy and an old man! The boy flung—I can not tell it! 'Tis horrible! But 'twill come, Bessie; all this will come to pass, when the leaves have fallen, when the snow has whitened the lanes and fields! Will come when the year is dead?"

"There, there, Ross! Do not talk so wildly," and Bessie laid her hand upon the bare arm of the boy. She started as if shot.

The skin of that arm almost burned her. "You are feverish, Ross," she said, sympathizingly. "The bandage is too tight. Let me loosen it," and she leaned over him. The boy had sunk into a deep, though troubled sleep.

"Poor, poor fellow!" murmured the girl,

as her eyes filled with tears. "He is very low; his senses are wandering. Oh, Father in heaven, watch over him and preserve him! Were he to die! And Ralph so far away!"

She sunk devoutly by the bedside, and, bowing her tear-bedewed face, prayed to Him who has promised a shelter to the shorn for strength and comfort.

This night, in the little cabin, far down on the banks of the roaring Merrimack, Nancy Hurd sat silent and motionless. She was in the little room, with the window looking out across the waste of sand-flats.

"He's away again!" she muttered. "He is away every night after her, a child, and she with her dead father lying stiff and cold in the house! Phil is a brute. But, I'll not put up with this. Philip Walshe, whatever he may say, is my husband; and, yes, I swear it! I shall pay the forfeit! When? Before the setting of a half-dozen suns! Half-dozen? Then, if Phil goes traitor on me, I'll get that pile of gold, and leave him forever!"

As she spoke, she drew from her bosom a long, naked knife; she ran her horny finger along its keen edge, as a wicked smile lifted her coarse lip.

At that instant, the outside door creaked on its hinges. Nancy concealed the knife hastily, and sinking into a chair, feigned sleep.

Black Phil entered the room. He paused as he saw Nancy quiet in the chair, and a half-pitying expression crept over his dark features.

Walking up to the woman, he laid his hand gently upon her shoulder.

She started, and rubbed her eyes, in well dissembled astonishment.

"You—you, Phil!" she said. "I am so glad you've come."

"You should have been in bed an hour ago," he said, unheeding her remark.

"I waited for you, Phil; I wanted to see you. Where have you been so long?"

"On my business, which is none of yours."

"Phil Walshe!"

"Yes, Nancy Hurd, I've been to see Bessie Raynor, and she says she likes me!"

The woman shook violently; but, suddenly rising, she left the room, without any reply.

As she passed into the next apartment, however, she clutched her hidden knife and hissed:

"Her doom is sealed."

CHAPTER XXV.

SHADOWS AND REALITIES.

THE sun of another day arose upon the world. It saw a little scene of solemn hurry and bustle at the humble home of the Raynors.

Bessie, though she had only slept a few hours, was up early. Then a few neighbors dropped in.

At nine o'clock a hearse drew up before the door; then came a carriage—only one. Shortly after this, a meek-faced man, in a black suit and white cravat, entered the lowly abode with a solemn, kindly step.

The undertaker, in his methodical way, had set to work with his assistant, making the last arrangements. Then he signified to the minister and to Bessie that all was ready.

With bursting heart, the poor girl retired to her room. In a few moments she emerged from it, clad in a plain suit of deep black—her pretty, pale face making a painful, yet half-sweet contrast to the dark bonnet which surrounded it.

"God strengthen me!" she murmured, as if at last her mind was made up, and turning abruptly, she entered the room of her invalid brother.

Ross started as his gaze fell upon Bessie, upon her sable, dreary attire; then he turned his head away. Large tears forced their way between the lids, and rolled down his wasted cheeks.

Bessie silently drew near, and placed her hand upon his brow.

"All is ready, my brother," she said, in a low, broken voice. "The hearse will move in a few minutes. I must go now. You are again better, and can rest quietly until I come back. God bless you, my brother!" and she stooped and pressed a kiss upon his bloodless lips.

"Oh, Bessie! Bessie! can I not look on her face again? Oh! can I not look upon my father again?" and his voice wailed sadly in the room.

A deep sob burst from Bessie Raynor's bosom. She could not restrain it.

"No, Ross," she answered; "it would not be safe to move you. God knows, my brother—"

"Enough, Bessie; I am resigned. Go."

"I'll kiss his cold, dead lips for you, brother. Oh! Heaven stand by me!"

As she uttered these words, she leaned down again and kissed him tenderly and as if loth to leave him. Then, tearing herself away, she rushed from the room.

At the bottom of the stairs, as she stood in the midst of the little silent company of five or six who had assembled, her gaze rested upon two new-comers.

Black Phil, dressed in his best attire, stood there; near him and to the rear, his

The coffin was borne solemnly forth and deposited in the hearse. Then the little procession moved softly off.

Lorin Gray's bosom heaved; his face paled, and he strode away at a headlong pace. The hearse and the single accompanying carriage wound their way along Newburg street until they reached Methuen. Into this they turned.

As the carriage reached Appleton street, a coarsely-clad woman standing on the corner started and gazed into it at the occupants. With a low exclamation of anger, she turned and strode back to Canal street. The cemetery was reached. Then, after some delay, the coffin was lowered into the grave, and the minister, in solemn tones, committed the "dust to dust."

Then all was over, and Bessie Raynor felt that almost all light had gone out from her.

After having seen the carriage and those who rode in it to Silas Raynor's funeral, Nancy Hurd—for she it was—turned up Canal street, and, in a few moments, paused by the front door of the Raynor home. She glanced around her. Nobody was observing her.

She tried the door-knob; it yielded. A moment, and she was inside. She paused and listened.

Then a faint voice waivered down stairs from above.

"Who's there?"

Nancy Hurd did not answer, but turned to the staircase, and strode boldly up. A moment, and she stood in the room of the cripple.

Ross started, and looked at her with great, wondering eyes. But then, a pleasant expression settled on his thin, wan face, and he smiled.

"Ah! Nancy, is it you? How kind in you!" he said, and he held his unhurt hand toward her.

The change which came into the woman's face was remarkable. A softness—a real yearning, motherly expression was there, as she walked to the bed, and took his wasted hand in hers. Then she bent over him, and a tear came to her eye.

"Poor Ross!" she murmured, "I am sorry you are hurt. I was coming by, and concluded to stop in and see you. But, is Bessie in her room?"

"No, Bessie has gone to—the funeral, and the poor fellow broke down."

"Ah! I thought I heard her in the room there."

"No, Nancy; and since I've been wounded, she stays in the room here—through this door. She wants to be near me."

Nancy started. Ross had told her what she wanted to know.

"I simply came, my poor fellow," she said, "to say how I'd do, and to bring this jelly for you."

She drew from beneath her apron a bowl.

"Thank you, Nancy. May God bless you for your kindness to me."

"Good-by, Ross," she said, after a pause, and she held her hand to him.

He took it, and held it some moments as if loth to let it go.

The woman noticed this act of affection, and as tears came into her eyes again, she leaned over him, and kissed him tenderly. Then she turned suddenly, wrenched her hand rather rudely from his thin fingers, and left the apartment.

At a later hour, when Bessie Raynor returned from her and trip to the desolate cemetery, she started as she alighted from the carriage in front of her humble home; for, just as she had thanked Black Phil for his kindness, she chanced to glance toward the adjacent street-corner.

She saw there a form she could not mistake—a bowed, though manly, form, with a sad, glancing face. A moment, however, and it had gone.

Bessie Raynor knew it was Lorin Gray, and, do what she could, as she caught sight of his bended, woe-begone figure, and of his sad, reproaching face, she could not prevent the flutter in her bosom, and the aching of her heart.

Then, as the carriage rolled away, without further notice of Black Phil, who also had alighted, Bessie ran quickly into the house.

And Lorin Gray, who, with bated breath, had watched the scene—who, untrusting, had waited for her return, straggled away, with a heavy load weighing him down.

The day passed slowly.

A terrible desolation settled upon Bessie, and, in the silence of the sick-chamber which was disturbed by no sound save the hard, short breathing of the wounded boy, she bowed her head again and prayed to God for help.

Ross Raynor slept soundly.

Bessie arose, leaned over him, and gently kissed his brow. Then she withdrew through the open door to the adjoining room.

In ten minutes, she was asleep—sleeping a deep, but disordered slumber.

The night wore on.

Suddenly, Ross Raynor awoke with a start. A smothered voice had broken upon his ear and aroused him.

He slowly turned his head.

The light in the lamp was still burning brightly.

Then the cripple saw a sight which, for a moment, froze his blood and struck him dumb.

CHAPTER XXVI. MOTHER MOLL.

ROSS RAYNOR strove to speak; but, his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, and he could not find utterance. He held his breath and looked.

A fearful tableau was revealed to the cripple's eyes.

Bessie Raynor was lying on her bed, in the room next her brother's, while above her towered the brawny form of a woman. In the hand of that woman a long, keen-edged knife was glittering.

Ross Raynor uttered a low groan and hid his face. Then, as with a giant's strength, forgetful of his state of weakness, of his prostrated form, of his broken arm, he sprang from bed and rushed into the other room.

With a low howl of rage, the fiend turned. She saw who had stood between her and murder. She sprang upon him, clutching him by the throat, and bore him backward into his own room, pulling the door after her.

"Spare me, spare me, Nancy! Oh!"

"Ha! 'tis you, Ross," and the woman suddenly released her hold and glared at him.

"Yes, Nancy, 'tis I. Oh! do not murder me, do not harm my sister, she has never harmed—"

"Never harmed me!" she hissed, in a low, deep voice; "why, boy, she has come between me and my husband. She has stolen his love from me, and, by heavens! she shall die!"

She suddenly turned and strode back toward the door. But the same puny hand again held her back.

"Nancy, Nancy," whispered the boy, "Bessie has not done what you say! Oh, believe me, Nancy!" and he stole his unwounded arm softly around the woman's neck, and lifted his big, bright, melancholy eyes to hers.

"Nancy," he continued, "I know you love me, and I know not why, I do love you, Nancy, though people say you are wicked. Oh! Nancy, we are only two, my sister and I; my brother, Ralph, is far away. Sometimes I think he'll never come back. Nancy, be kind to me, yet, and spare Bessie," and he bowed his head on her broad bosom and went silently.

It was a strange light that beamed over that hardened woman's face of bronze; it was a strange fire which gleamed in her eyes; it was not a wicked or a vengeful fire. Then, that fire was dimmed, extinguished, for a tear had sprung there and hid the sparkle.

A wild shudder swept over her frame; she stretched out her hand which held the fatal knife, the fingers relaxed, the weapon fell, and quivered on its well-tempered blade, as it pierced the hard boards of the floor.

Silently clasping the frail form of the boy, who clung to her, she murmured, in his ear:

"You have conquered me, Ross! You have driven back the wild, dark blood which was filling my brain and numbing my hand for a hellish deed! You have crept into my heart and made me feel that I am a woman again! Oh! Ross, had I had kind words often whispered in my ears, had I had gentle treatment, I would not be the evil-faced, wicked Nancy that I am. I was not always so. I can remember long ago when—"

But, 'tis an old tale, Ross, an idle tale. I'll not tell it to you, now. I must be gone."

She softly took away her arms, released his single one from her neck, and then, stooping, lifted him gently to the bed.

"Now, Ross," she said, "go to sleep again. Your sister is safe. I swear it. For your sake, I spare her. As for me, poor black-hearted Nancy, I'll suffer on in silence. I'll bear my burden, as best I may. But, Ross, promise me that you'll say nothing of this. There may be time left for me yet, to do better, to do some good. Promise me, Ross, and I'll begone."

She looked at him with her tear-bedecked face, and her eyes seemed to plead with him.

"I promise, I promise, dear Nancy! May God bless you! And Nancy, I know you will not care, I will pray to Him, that He may lighten your load, that He may bless you."

The woman gazed at his wan face, now lighted up with enthusiasm; she leaned down and imprinted a warm, passionate kiss upon his forehead. Then, seizing the knife, she was gone.

Bessie had slept unconsciously through all.

The next afternoon, or rather evening, for the mill had disgorged its living burden and sent them forth to breathe the fresh air, Lorin Gray strode across the eastern bridge and turned into the Andover road. A cloud was upon his brow, and with eyes fastened on the boards at his feet, he continued his way. Dark thoughts were filling his mind and racking his brain.

"And Bessie, to fling me aside," he muttered, "for that dark-browed villain, for that man whom her father hated, who would have murdered her brother, who has a wife, deny it as he may. Oh! heavens! and she a child! But—"

He paused, as a sudden thought seemed to strike him. Have I been true? Have I loved Bessie and Minerva, both? Do I love them both? Can I be true to both? Have I not told my love to Minerva! Oh! God, I have, indeed, been cruel—cruel to the poor child."

"But, I must hurry on. My poor old mother, I have neglected her, I have put her from my memory. But, to-night I'll see her and will make amends. Poor old mother, and she loves me so!"

Night had now fallen, but Lorin Gray, looking neither to the right nor the left, hurried on.

In a plain, but comfortably furnished room of a small, unpretending house, nestled in the woods on the Andover road, some three miles from Lawrence, sat an old woman—a strange, mysterious-looking woman.

She was nearly seventy years of age, and her long, white hair smoothed softly away from her forehead fell, unrestrainedly, in a snow-white mass upon her rounded, age-bent shoulders. But the face, though wrinkled and tanned, scarred and seamed, as it was in the long battle of life, was kind and wondrously fresh. Her eyes sparkled and flashed as she hummed an old-time ditty and gazed around her.

She was clad in a manner that betokened she was fair-to-do in a worldly way, or had some kind relative to care for her and her wants in her old age.

A fire burned brightly in the stove; on that stove a plain supper was cooking. The windows were up and the doors were open; for, in addition to the heat of the weather, the stove rendered the room uncomfortably warm and stifling.

This old woman's name was Mary Gray, but she was commonly called Mother Moll. Singular powers were attributed to her by the lowly people, and by some who belonged to the higher walks of life. It was asserted that she had the power of divination, of telling of the past, and of unveiling the future. Some called her witch, others spirit-u-alist; but Mother Moll unpretendingly, yet boldly, designated herself a fortune-teller. One thing is certain, it was by this calling that she had made her bread in her younger days.

Certain it is, too, that Mother Moll, if hearsay and authority were to be believed, had performed some wonders, almost passing credence.

She was the woman whom Lorin Gray called mother; yet she was not his mother in the flesh, and the young man knew it; but Mother Moll stood to him as such, having reared him and taken care of him from an uncertain, yet a very early age. She had fed him, had educated him as he grew up in the city of New York, and had procured a situation for him in the great metropolis. But, the young man longed again for home scenes, longed for her whom he called mother, and without her bidding he had returned, a fine, handsome fellow. Without her knowledge, he had obtained

work in the Pemberton Mill: the fortune-teller, while she frowned slightly, had welcomed him back with open arms.

This happened a number of years before the commencement of our story.

To-night she sat with her hands folded across her bosom and gazed, sometimes, out of the open door into the darkness of the gathering night; sometimes at the cheery glow of the stove, with the old-fashioned black tea-pot simmering thereon. As she gazed, the contented, happy look gradually faded from her countenance and an expression of brooding, foreboding anxiety took its place. Then she leaned her head softly down and bent her old eyes, in a stare, on the floor.

"I have not read the stars!" she murmured. "I have not burned the black hellebore; I have not buried the deadly nightshade in yew! A vision rises before me! Oh! ye unseen powers! A terrible vision of flood and flame, of crushed men and women, of roasted children and gray-haired old men! And, my noble Lorin! Oh! heaven, the picture is dim! But, he struggles through it! And now, Bessie Raynor, now, proud Minerva Ames—Ha!" She paused suddenly, lifted her hand, and gazed toward the door.

A tall, manly form was standing there, silently, solemnly.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 73.)

The Ocean Girl: OR, THE BOY BUCCANEER.

BY LAFAYETTE LAFOREST,
AUTHOR OF "CRUISER CRUISE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER IV. ABOARD THE DUKE OF KENT.

WE must now introduce those upon whom Captain Joseph Gantling intended to carry out his designs, the nefariousness of which Edward Drake scarcely understood. However manly his feelings and emotions, he was but a boy, and hardly able to realize the abominable intentions of the buccaneer toward the crew and passengers of the Duke of Kent.

This was a splendid vessel, built for the Indian trade, and about to be sent out partly on special service—that is, with an amount of valuable treasure on board, which, as far as people in general knew, might have been a cargo of black diamonds from Newcastle, and partly to convey to India certain important passengers and public functionaries, who objected to the delays and wearisome life attendant on a convoyed fleet, when good sailers are compelled to wait for the merest crawling butter-tub.

The Duke of Kent was a large vessel, well armed, powerfully manned, and in every way fitted out with a view to the comfort of its passengers, as well as their defense. It was war time, but a large and well provided Indianan, considered itself good enough for most French frigates, so that on this point little emotion was felt.

What, then, had such a vessel to fear from a brigantine which, however rapid a sailer, however well equipped a buccaneer, must succumb to the mere weight of metal of so large an opponent? But the government, in dispatching a royal cruiser in search of the Ocean Girl, did not even think of the Indianan. Captain Gantling was never very verbose, but to his crew he was always silent. The deserter knew nothing of the buccaneer's intentions, and could only report his presence in the estuary of the Thames.

As for the six men who had been so treacherously sent on board the Duke of Kent, they were all able seamen, discharged, as appeared by the buccaneer, at their own wish, after serving several years. None on board the Ocean Girl expected that their fellows had been detached, at double wages, upon a desperate enterprise.

It was the day after the slight encounter between his Majesty's sloop Thunder and the Ocean Girl that the Indianan prepared to take her departure. The sailing of a large ship was not then such an every-day matter as it is now, so that the wharves were crowded with boys and other idlers to watch its progress, while the vessel was not itself free from incumbrances, such as friends and relatives of passengers are always thought when they are in the way of a captain or crew. Even the seamen themselves ran in every possible direction by the right one, until at last, when the huge fabric was hauled into the stream, there were clear decks and an orderly ship's company.

The wind was fair, and as even the most delicate *mal de mer* before Gravesend, the poop and quarter-deck were crowded by passengers, chiefly military, naval and civil officers, their wives, and, in some instances, their children; while about a dozen cadets and as many young ladies stood, the former and the latter conversing, or, as Jack said, "the chickens crept close up to the old hens, as if there had been hawks aboard."

In this way the voyage commenced, the ship being now wholly under the command of the pilot, though the worthy skipper, Captain Fred, Dunbar, never kept his eye off her head, the navigation of so large a vessel in a crowded and tortuous river being a matter of serious consideration.

In this way, having started easily, they got to Gravesend in one tide, and then anchored until the turn, when they proceeded by moonlight, and finally took up a position right in the mouth of the Thames, about a mile to the N. E. of where the daring buccaneer had lain.

The next day, at early dawn, the Indianan took her final departure, running to the eastward until clear of all the banks and dangers which surround the mouth of old father Thames. The wind by this time was light and uncertain, with occasional puffs, so that good watch was kept, the more that two hours in the afternoon watch it became overcast and foggy. The huge vessel now forged slowly ahead, the captain by no means desiring to commence a voyage by a collision, or to allow an enemy's vessel to creep upon him unawares.

The passengers still kept the deck, as during the day the sea had every moment been getting smoother, and the wind less and less.

In an elevated position, that enabled her to command a view of a circumscribed circle, stood a young lady, who might have been twelve, or who might have been fourteen, but who, no matter what was her age, was excessively pretty, wore charming golden curls, a Leghorn straw hat, and never seemed happier than when prattling to a

stout, florid, handsome man of nearly sixty, whom she addressed by the name of "Pa," and who, from his dress, bluff manner, and, above all, honest and fearless countenance, any man of penetration would have taken for a British sailor, which he was, being no less a personage than the admiral sent out to relieve one inviolated home.

"Is this the way we are going to travel, pa?" she said, we verily believe for the twentieth time, which, considering she was the only child of a widower, brought her no rebuke, but a patient answer.

"You know, my dear, that we can not command the weather," replied the admiral, mildly. "To-morrow, perhaps, we may go quicker than you could wish."

"Father!" suddenly exclaimed the girl, "what light is that yonder, nearly in front of us?"

"Eh—what!" cried the officer, rising.

The girl pointed to where a light was rocking on the water, in a somewhat unnatural and rapid manner.

"Some coble or other at anchor. Captain!"

"Admiral!" replied the skipper, stepping forward, and looking in the direction of the light.

"Why, what on earth can the fellow be doing there?" said the captain, who gave at the same time a whispered order to the man at the wheel. "He can't be at anchor, nor does it appear a vessel lying-to."

They were now within about fifty feet of the light, at which everybody was looking with some anxiety and curiosity. There was scarcely a breath of wind; the huge Indianan surged but slowly forward, and not a word was spoken.

"Ship ahoy!" said a feeble voice.

In an instant, at a sign from the captain, the helm was put down, and the vessel hove aback. A boat was then put out with all the precision and rapidity of a man-of-war. Six men rowed, while one of the mates steered. The huge vessel now stood still, except a slight sidling motion, and the boat disappeared in the gloom.

Nothing could have been more opportune for the captain of the Ocean Girl than the fog, which kept silently rolling down upon him, to turn day as it were into night, and to render the sea upon which he sailed one of the most dangerous in the world. Usually, nothing is more abhorrent to the feelings of a sailor, especially on a dangerous coast, than one of those remorseless clouds of vapor, which wrap him round in darkness, hiding from him rocks, light-houses, cliffs, and even the companion ship, that may be sailing within twenty yards in fancied security.

But now the event was all-important, and the buccaneer, without even reducing sail, which, under the circumstances, would have been the act of a prudent man, kept on his course for several hours, until he thought he might safely change his course, which he did, boldly heading for the Thames once more. The tack was changed, and scarcely was the sheeting home, when, sharp upon a wind, the Ocean Girl cut through the head sea, as with a knife. She was a beautiful sight always; but now she was like a bird that was frightened, and had spread her wings in flight.

Toward evening, the fog still continuing, and the coast of England being in almost dangerous proximity, Captain Gantling determined to lie to. This was done, and most rigid watch kept. For some time there was, despite the wind, a heavier fog than ever, cold, damp and yellow; but soon after the sun had set blood-red or angry, the vapor lifted.

The night was very dark, but with their glasses the captain and his chief officer swept the horizon from the deck, while Edward ran aloft, and did the same there.

"Be-low!"

"What is it?"

"Here she comes with the wind," roared Edward, and came down by the run.

In an instant all hands were making sail, even royals and sky-sails fore and aft, and before twenty minutes, the standing sails were set; but still the royal cruiser, which had been at anchor on the tail of the sands, came down upon them head over head.

Captain Gantling swore a round oath, and then gave orders to his lieutenant, who at once bade the men pass the buckets up to one watch aloft to wet the sails. The buckets were whipped up to the mast-head, and this maneuver was continued until a drizzling rain came on and rendered it unnecessary. It was pitch dark, without a moon—every light was put out, even the binnacle lamp, and a star being chosen as a guide, the schooner was steered by it. Before dawn the cruiser was hull down, and the fog, as often happens, an hour after became as thick as ever.

The buccaneer now headed once more for the coast of England, as near as he could in the direction of Deal or Dover, and kept on at a slow and steady pace, reefed topsails and bare yards aloft, until a dip of the lead told him he was nearly on the track of outward-bound vessels. The fog now was, as the sailors say, fit to be cut with a knife, and it was necessary to be wary. The brig was put head to wind, with the foresail aback, after which Edward Drake and Captain Gantling held a conference, which, however, referring to matters already decided upon, did not take up much time.

The long-boat was put out, and in it was placed a couple of stout, air-tight water-casks, some planks and a pole, with two large ship lanterns. As they advanced, the barrels were lashed together, the planks nailed on top, and when about two hundred feet from the brig, was cast adrift, with an anchor attached, which soon brought up this singular buoy with a round turn. The pole with the lighted lanterns was then erected firmly, and the trick was ready to be played.

Edward, in the jacket and trowsers of a ship boy, now clambered on the singular craft, and was there left, his arm round the pole, looking very far from the miserable being he ought to have been under the peculiar and painful circumstances of the case. He had a knife, a stone jar of beer, and some bread and meat, upon which, as the long-boat moved away, he commenced an attack.

"I hope, now," said Gantling, with a grin, "you are well armed at all points. Drop anchor and keep watch."

"Ay, ay!"

And thus these two parted, never to meet again, until—but we must not divulge the secrets of the prison-house until our narrative requires it.

Edward ate his bread and beef, drank his beer, and then crouched upon the tossing raft, rather impatient to be removed, as the berth was neither comfortable nor safe. Had there been a heavy sea on, he must at

once have been washed overboard, but as it was, the vessel rose and fell with the motion of the billows.

Hark! What sound is that?

There is no other like it, and Edward knows it; it is the swash of the salt sea waves under the bows of a vessel coming down upon him; there she looms in the fog—full sail upon the deceptive light upon the treacherous buoy.

"Ship ahoy!"

"What ship is that?" roared a hoarse voice, "Answer, or I'll blow you out of water. Answer, I say!"

Ned saw the bows, saw them sheer round, as when a ship prepares to broadside. Utterly bewildered at this singular turn in his fortunes, he rose to his feet, gave one despairing cry, and plunged into the boiling waters, just as the roar of the cannonade was thundering through the air.

CHAPTER V.

"COME ON BOARD, SIR!"

WHEN Ned Drake plunged headlong into the water, just as the swash of the sloop was heard through the fog, it was with a perfect conviction that there was no other way of saving his life. His reasoning faculties had been sufficiently sharpened by his peculiar and somewhat dangerous course of life, to make him aware that the trick they would have played upon the Indianan had recoiled on themselves, and that the enemy they so much dreaded had discovered the whereabouts of the smuggler, instead of their enticing the Indianan into their clutches.

But for the moment every other consideration vanished before that of escaping soot free. Edward was, as every other youth, no matter what his occupation, should be, an excellent swimmer. He revealed in water like a dog, and never was more happy than when floundering about, or practicing all those efforts of the art which are to be acquired only by practice. In the present instance, the young officer of the buccaneer craft, coming up only to the surface when imperiously called to it from want of air, of which having breathed sufficient for his purpose, he went down again.

At length, however, feeling exhausted, he ventured to remain on the surface, and look around in search both of the raft to which he had clung, and the sloop which had fired a broadside at it. But not a trace of either was to be seen. Edward Drake was alone on the water, with nothing but his physical powers to promise him immunity from death.

But the youth, without once giving way to despair, knew well enough that however long and protracted the struggle might be, the end must be the same—an ocean grave. The distance from land was beyond the means of any ordinary swimmer, as, though savages, born and bred, as it were, on the water, have been known to struggle on for days, no such hope could be entertained. Besides, he neither knew which way was toward shore, nor which way was the open sea, to which it might be wiser to make than the land, in the hope of being picked up by homeward or outward bound vessels.

Under any circumstances, however, the chances were formidably against him, and it required a stouter heart than is possessed by many boys of his age to enable him to struggle at all, when by merely raising his arms in the act of clapping them, he might have sunk to rise no more. Ned Drake, however, calmly took every precaution, kept his arms down in the water, and, without losing his presence of mind, began to reflect as to the wisest course to be adopted.

He looked about for the sun, but that luminary was wholly concealed by the yellow, dense and drizzling fog which enveloped all nature.

But hark! Is not that the sea washing against some solid substance close at hand? Certainly, and there it looms high and black. It is the sloop once more under easy sail, returning on its way to discover the mystery of its broadside against a vessel which, ere the echoes had died away, had vanished into thin air. As the sails could be made out in the fog, Drake saw that she was lying-to, and drifting with the tide.

"It's very strange," said a voice, so near that Edward quite started, "how she got away. Surely, she could not have sunk bodily."

"I hope not, for there's an end of the prize-money. If we could only pick up a bit of the wreck, save a sailor, we might learn something, but, good! it was like a scene in a pantomime. Well, we must wait till this cursed fog clears up, when the matter may be cleared up too. Hail! hail the main-sheet!"

At this critical moment, when the sloop was about to get under way again, Ned had clutched a rope which hung from the gangway, and by which officers held when ascending to the deck, and by means of this was about to climb up, when his quick eye caught sight of something a little astern, which awakened in his bosom both a sense of hope and thoughts of the mission he had undertaken. Without an instant's hesitation he dropped into the water, and, striking out, was a moment later clambering on to his raft, the cause of so much bewilderment to his majesty's dutiful servants.

The raft, however, was in somewhat of a pitiable state. The wooden bucket, in which his provisions had been placed, was upset; his grog was spilt, the lashings were loose—so that, in case of the slightest squall, all must go to pieces, and he be once more cast into the sea at the mercy of wind and waves.

There was another misfortune. His lamps appeared to have suffered severely from the collision, having been put out, and, in all probability, the light within them could be relighted, all hope of being taken off by either buccaneer or Indianan was at an end.

With a trembling and anxious heart, Ned Drake lowered the lanterns by means of a pulley and rope, and putting them on his tiny deck, examined them carefully.

They were not much damaged, the lights having been extinguished rather by the violence of what the French call *roulis* than by any actual contact with the enemy's vessel, which, indeed, though passing all most over the decoy—by which means it remained unseen—had not been struck.

Ned Drake would not

Gladly would he, after his swim, have renovated his body by means of some of those creature comforts which had originally been provided him, but this was impossible; his bread and meat were, no doubt, within the all-devouring maw of some monster of the deep, while his beer and rum were so commingled with the briny ocean, that not the ablest chemist that ever taught an admiring audience could have traced its presence.

There was nothing then left for him but to bemoan his circumstances, and wait upon that precarious tub-supported deck for such fortune as awaited him—capture by the sloop of war, safety from the buccaner, or success and good luck on board the Indian man and treasure ship. The reflections made the young sailor think somewhat seriously of other things; and it seemed to strike him, in that hour of peril and doubt, that perhaps the enterprise upon which he had started was not either the most honorable or the most proper upon which a youth might be engaged.

But then, said sophistry, what has society, or government, or the good people done to me that I should, having fallen into the hands of a contraband dealer, think much of what I am about to do to them? He fancied that there could be no life more delightful to a youth of high spirit and mighty resolves than that of a buccaner, a skimmer of the ocean, who only differed from the legalized privateers that swarmed on every sea, in wanting a commission from the king, a formality which, while dispensing them from control, left them to roam where they would, and act as be seemed them best.

Visions, too, of that island, rich with hopeful fruits, where eternal summer reigned, and where they were to rule as monarchs, with an indistinct notion of the importance of cherry lips and flashing eyes to the sum total of human happiness, passed through his mind. It is true, in an odd, dream-like way, but still sufficiently to influence one to whom the ideal of happiness was higher, but by no means dangerous motion. Which way the tide was running it was impossible to say, though that it was moving fast could be made out by the constant wash of the water.

Trifle as it may appear to those on shore, who, unless utterly without means, have something always at hand to eat, Ned was getting hungry and faint, so that he knew the moment the sea rose, he should be powerless to hold on. This was terrible, especially as the Indian and all other vessels appeared to have resolved themselves into phantoms. Even the buccaner had deserted him, though he had believed Captain Gantling would make a push to find out what had been his fate.

It was in reality a fearful position, and Edward began to feel his head getting dizzy, and his senses gradually leaving him, when a sound familiar, and not more familiar than welcome, reached his ears. It was his last chance, however, for he felt keenly that if this failed him, he must yield to the terrible impulse to sleep which was coming upon him, and then die.

The noise was that of a heavy body—a large vessel, as a matter of course—forcing its way slowly through the water against the tide. It was at no great distance, and if any proper look-out were kept, as a natural consequence his bobbing lights would be seen. Still he would not wholly trust to that, so, raising his voice, he hailed the passing sound. For some minutes no reply came, and then it was wafted on the breeze, through a ship's trumpet, indistinct and muffled—Who calls?

"Ship ahoy—boy ahoy!" he replied. "Where away, mate?" replied Ned, who was now roused by hope.

But the men now saw the lights, and bore down upon him. Very few minutes elapsed ere he was hauled on board.

"My eye," said one of the men, "if it ain't some outlandish reefer. Where do you hail from, eh?"

"British Channel, just now," replied Ned, "faint, tired, and hungry; so pull away, and don't talk."

"Cuss my eyes, Bob," remarked one, "when this young bear comes for'ard, with an old blue shirt on and a Scotch cap, we shall make him pay his footin' for his impudence."

With these words they reached the side, where the men ascended, Ned, from force of habit, remaining last, as claiming the highest rank. He then clambered on deck, to the crowd who were surveying him with eager eyes, caught sight of a naval uniform, and spoke.

"Come on board, sir," he said, and fainted.

CHAPTER VI.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

Now, if Ned Drake had been the most artful boy in all creation, this way of speaking, just as if he had been on duty, and had returned to report himself, following the said dramatic tableau by a second, that of fainting, he could not have insured for himself a better reception. All inquiries were thus stopped, and all idea of sending him ashore before they left the channel was abandoned, until the skipper was able to judge if he could bear it.

When Ned came too, he was far better off than he deserved to be, for he was lying on a couch in the ship's best cabin, with a pretty girl bathing his forehead with aromatic vinegar, and a stout, portly gentleman, in undress naval uniform, looking on. A servant was preparing tea very quietly.

Ned looked round with a dreamy stare, and then pointed to a water-bottle, as if he was faint, but the little girl handed him a glass of wine, which he drank hurriedly.

"And now, my lad," said the stout gentleman, cheerily, "have some tea, and then, perhaps, you will tell us what you were doing off the Goodwin Sands on a couple of old water casks."

"Sir Stephen! Loo!" he cried, and then fell back, muttering to himself, "The Lord have mercy on my wicked soul!"

The little girl clapped her hands, laughed, and then gave him her hand to rise.

"Didn't I say it was Edward Drake?" she continued, as, pale, ghastly, and scarcely able to stand, the young buccaner allowed himself to be placed at the table, where, glad to avoid questioning, he appeared to devote himself wholly to the business of the moment.

The plot of Captain Gantling, his evil intentions to the ship, his allusion to an enemy—and he was aware the pirate disliked, if he did not hate, Sir Stephen Rawdon—flashed through his mind with lightning-like rapidity; but there came staring him in the face, at the same moment, certain fatal words.

"On your solemn word, under no circumstances, will you reveal what I shall say?"

"I thought Loo must be mistaken," said Sir Rawdon, kindly, when he saw that our hero was meeting a little. "But now I begin to know my old pupil again. Egad, sir, it was a queer way to come on board!"

"It was, sir," replied Ned, sadly; "and the best thing you can do is to throw me overboard again."

"Why?" said Sir Stephen, while Loo opened her great eyes and stared.

"Because you know the character of the craft to which I belong—to which I belonged," he added, with heartfelt emotion, "and which, if Providence offers me but a coal barge in place of it, I will leave."

"Is not Captain Gantling your father?"

"I hope not, sir," said Ned, "though he has been very kind to me; but something tells me he is not my father. But I was going to say, I was put there to serve one of his purposes, and I have given a promise not to explain."

"Well—well—my good lad, you need say no more. I am going out to take the command of the Indian fleet, and if you really desire to abandon the unlawful course you have hitherto followed, why, I will take you as a midshipman myself—so say nothing about the smuggler on board. Leave all explanations to me."

"You are very kind, sir."

"Not at all. Loo, here, always liked you—you are her pet; so, as you have need of rest, stay with her. I will speak to the captain. When you are tired, there is a berth there ready for you."

Ned Drake remained with Loo, quite bewildered, for though at any other time he would have delighted in the prattle of his old friend and favorite, Louisa Rawdon, yet now his thoughts were far away; and, pleading fatigue and exhaustion, he was soon glad to avail himself of the offer of the admiral, and retire to a state-room, there to give free scope to his pent-up feelings.

All his desires for an adventurous life—all his dreams for avenging his supposed father's wrongs—all his fantastic visions of a lovely island, covered by exquisite verdure, and peopled by dusky angels, with a royalty in perspective, had vanished before the kind, ness shown him, not so much by Sir Stephen as that manifested by little Loo, his playfellow and companion for three happy years.

A dozen trifling circumstances now darted across the tablet of his memory, one of which, in particular, was a revelation. When Captain Gantling found that his adopted son—he never claimed him as more—had been kindly treated, housed, and educated by the temporarily retired admiral, his rage at first knew no bounds. As soon as he got his youthful charge away, and discovered how he had been used, he at first, while cursing Sir Stephen heartily, added, "Well, he had but the right to, anyway; but I've a rod in pickle for the old curmudgeon he little suspects. But I must wait."

But now Ned Drake was a man in feeling, and determined, whatever happened, to be no mere tool in the hands even of one of whom he personally had no complaint to make, and whom, therefore, he would not betray. At the same time he was resolved, unless the buccaner showed some legal right to detain him, to leave him, but to leave him openly, and in a way that became a sailor. How this was to be done he could not say, though he shrewdly suspected the Ocean Girl would not be long in giving him the opportunity.

He would then tell him his determination to defend Loo at the peril of his life, and if he would not abandon his designs, consider himself absolved from the fearful duty which hung now with such a leaden weight on his spirits. It was difficult for him to explain the sudden revulsion of feeling which the sight of the playfellow of his happy youth had brought about, but the fact was patent to his heart.

Even Captain Gantling had educated his protégé to tell the truth, and his three years' residence under a clergyman's tuition had fixed this one great cardinal virtue on his mind. He could not, therefore, reveal that which he was pledged not to tell, but he was resolved to foil whatever might be the evil intentions of the buccaner toward Sir Stephen and Loo, for he was now certain that this was the man of whom he spoke as mine enemy to slay.

As to the treasure the ship contained, that he cared nothing about. His education had taught him to consider it a matter of cleverness to outwit the Government, nor was he likely in those days on Shippey Island to learn any very different notions. He would confine himself, therefore, to saving human life, and let every thing else take its course, though how he was to act in any case, without putting his new friends on their guard, he could not tell.

But no matter what he risked, were it his body or his soul, he would not have the father of little Loo injured.

With this resolution firm in his head, he went to sleep, to dream uneasily, but at length to awake refreshed and resolute. He found when he rose some clean things, which the admiral had provided, and which his purse had easily commanded from the cadets, midshipmen, and merchant reefers on board. When, therefore, he appeared at breakfast, it was in a span-new blue jacket and anchor buttons, a cap with a gold band, and white duck trousers, which nondescript uniform became him well.

Very little allusion was made to the events which had brought our hero on board, but the conversation turned very much on the lad's early life, of which, however, the young buccaner knew very little. The smuggler chief had often asserted that Ned was not his son, even alluding with much earnestness to the fact, though he would often say he was all the more bound to protect him.

Except those parts he had visited in the free-trader—in war times less looked down upon than now—he knew no land but Shippey.

"I feel as if there I had taken root and grown," he said, with a smile. "Even old Meg of the Red Cow, who brought me up to seven years, is in my mind but a part of the island."

"You never had an inkling of your origin, your parents, whence you came, or any thing of that kind?" asked Sir Stephen.

"Never," replied Ned, and then he faltered, "except once, a strange and unaccountable assertion."

"Speak it, boy. You have strangely come under my care, and I will do every thing in my power to serve you."

Ned Drake then related that on board the smuggler was one Dirtrick, a sailor who had always been a favorite of his, and who returned the liking. When he was younger, this man was fond of telling long-winded yarns to the youth, which often turned upon persons unlawfully deprived of their position and fortune.

"Ah, Ned," he would say, "there's many folk in this world as sails under false colors. I know some as might have to haul down their flag if you had your rights; but all in good time; he knows—he knows"—and he would point to the skipper—"but don't say a word as I said so, or, Master Ned, he'll cut my throat."

"Master Edward Drake," said Sir Stephen Rawdon, with much feeling, as he shook his head, "we must find this Dirtrick, and we'll make him tell what he means. We'll find a father for you, and in the mean time, why, I'll be a father to you, so come on deck, and show yourself with Loo."

And this was the man the young buccaner had leagued himself with pirates to capture and destroy.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 79.)

Betrayed.

BY C. D. CLARK.

THE fair land of Mexico, the Eldorado of the West. The land slept in beauty. In the distance rose the towers of the city of Monterey, and the chime of bells mingled with the lowing of cattle and the voices of women. La Vega's ranch stood upon a sunny slope, in the midst of luxuriant vegetation, and every thing around betokened the wealth of the owner. At the back of the ranch was a thick growth of chaparral, and a young girl was standing at the foot of a great tree, with downcast eyes, nervously tapping her riding-habit with a whip she held in her hand. A quick step was heard, and a young man, in the uniform of an American officer, sprang forward and stood at her side.

"Zara!" he cried, clasping her in his arms, "I am so glad to meet you again!"

He was a handsome, bold-looking young fellow, and she a rare specimen of womanly beauty and grace. At a glance, you could see that she was of Southern blood, the rich tide mantling gloriously in her cheeks, and her thick, glossy hair floating about her like a silken robe.

"Why will you persist in seeing me, Edward," she said, "when you know that I have no right to meet you—I, the daughter of a patriotic Mexican—you, one of the race of the invader?"

"Because I love you," replied the young soldier, pressing her closer to his breast. "Because, to you and these wars are as nothing, and the enemies of the race fade away. I love you, and by that love forget that I am not of your blood, or that you are not of mine."

"You can not love as I do, Edward," she said, with her head upon his shoulder. "The children of the North know nothing of the fervor of passion which burns in the bosom of the daughter of the South. For you I am ready to give up all—country, home, name, and friends—and to dwell in a cold land, far from my beloved Mexico; ah, how!"

"You shall never repent it, dear one," cried the young man, impulsively. "I will make your life so pleasant that you will forget all else, for my sake. When Monterey falls, and it must fall soon, you shall be my wife, and we shall never be parted again."

"My father will hate me when he knows that I have given my heart to one of the enemies of Mexico," murmured Zara. "Ah, what a terrible passion is love, which makes us forget all else, and turn against the country we love!"

"What is this?" cried a harsh voice. "Caramba, girl, what are you doing here?"

"My father!" cried Zara. "Oh, heaven! I am lost!"

The bushes parted, and a dark-browed man, in the garb of a Mexican ranchero, stood before them. He cast a fierce look at the young officer, and, seizing Zara by the arm, dragged her away.

"Stand back, foolish girl," he hissed, "or I shall do you mischief. Away with you, and leave me to settle with this madman, who has put his life in my hands."

"I will not go," replied Zara. "Father, you shall not harm him, for I love him."

"You! Away, I say, or my wrath will overwhelm you. Or stay, if you wish to see him die—for die he shall!"

He drew a whistle from beneath his clothing, and was about to raise it to his lips, when she sprang at him like a tigress, and grasped him by the arm.

"Do not give the call, my father. If you would not kill me, let him go in peace. He has done no wrong, for I alone am to blame."

"So is it ever with these thrice-cursed Americans," hissed La Vega. "They overrun our country, lay waste our cities, and turn our women against the country for which they should be willing to die. Hands off, Zara; I say that he shall not live!"

He again raised the whistle, but she clung to his arm, and he could not sound it.

"Ally, Edward," she gasped, "I do not fear him, nor will I escape."

By way of reply, the young soldier made a single forward step, and grasping the Mexican by the shoulder, tore the whistle from his hand and ground it beneath his heel.

"I am not a man to suffer you to call your guerrillas to your side, Señor La Vega," he said. "Be quiet, or, much against my will, I will put you on your back. Listen to me. I love your daughter honorably, and would make her my wife."

"She shall die by my own hand sooner than so disgrace me. Hal! take that!" He had succeeded in drawing a knife with his disengaged left hand, and, unperceived by the young man, thrust full at his breast. But, the arm of Zara interposed, and, with a sickening sensation, the young man saw the bright steel pierce through the beautiful member, and the red blood leap out and

dye the light muslin of the dress she wore. La Vega uttered a wailing cry and dropped the knife.

"Murderer!" cried Edward Fairfield, striking him down at a single blow. "You have killed her!"

Zara staggered a little, and her lover caught her in his arms and tore open the sleeve of her dress. The sharp knife had passed through the flesh just below the elbow, inflicting a deep but not dangerous wound. He took off a gay scarf he wore, and wrapped it about the wounded arm, and bade her hasten to the house for assistance.

"If you wish me to come to your aid, leave a letter in the hollow tree, and I shall get it. Hasten, for your wound must be attended to."

He pressed his lips fervently to hers, and they parted; but, scarcely had they gone a hundred feet, when the whistle of La Vega sounded through the chaparral, and she heard the rushing feet of men, cries of rage, and immediately after, the clatter of hoofs. A hearty Yankee cheer and the crack of a pistol followed, and the sounds of pursuit died away in the distance.

Zara stanchd the blood as well as she could, and, by the time it was done, her father came back, wearing a gloomy look.

"For the present he has escaped," he said; "but, it shall not be for long. There are those upon his track who will give him no rest until he is dead. As for you, unworthy child, you will remain a prisoner until you marry the man I have chosen for you—Enrico Velasquez."

"I will be a prisoner for life, then," she said, "for I will never marry Enrico Velasquez."

He took her by the wounded arm so roughly that the blood started from beneath his fingers, and Zara sunk, faint and ghastly, at his feet. All the father in him was awakened by the sight, and he raised her in his arms and carried her to a room, where, for three days, she lay in a fever, calling upon Edward Fairfield's name in her delirious accents, while her father sat by her, watching her as the tiger watches over his young. His fierce heart was full of hatred of Fairfield, and he was studying plans to get him in his power. When Zara was well enough to be left alone, he went away, and in two days came back, accompanied by a dark young man, in the rich dress of a Mexican major. This was Enrico Velasquez, the man whom he had chosen for his daughter.

He left them alone together, trusting to the young soldier to plead his cause, and he pleaded well. He spoke of the love he had borne her from childhood, of the encouragement he had received, and of the great interests they had in common; but she listened to him as an image might have done. Her only answer was, "I do not love you. I can not marry one whom I do not love."

Then his fierce Southern blood grew hot, and he began to reproach her. She heard him in stony silence, refusing to reply to his angry words. He left her, and reported his poor progress to her father, who came to her in turn, and gave her a grave warning to change her mind. She defied him, and would not listen to the priest who was sent to reason with her.

"You will not listen to good counsel, then," said her father. "Then I swear, by my patron saint, that you shall marry Enrico Velasquez in three days. He must go back to his regiment this morning; but I have influence enough to obtain another leave of absence for him, and when he comes back you shall be his wife."

"I will refuse him at the foot of the altar," she said.

"And the priest will not listen to you, foolish girl. He knows best what is for your interest and for mine. Prepare yourself for the fate which awaits you, and do not refuse to refuse the man I have chosen for you. As for your American lover, he has not long to live. Come with me."

He led her into the house, and locked her into her room, and she heard him order the servants to see that she did not get out.

She waited until she saw her father leave the house, and then stole to the window overlooking the veranda. A grapevine trellis furnished an easy ladder for her descent, and she went back and wrote a note to her lover, put on a bonnet and veil, so that she might not attract too much notice, and, descending by means of the trellis, escaped into the chaparral without being seen. Scarcely two hundred yards from the house, in the thicket, stood a huge hollow tree, in which she had often left a letter for her lover. She stole cautiously forward, took out the letter, and was about to place it in the tree, when an iron hand grasped her by the wrist, and she met the scowling eyes of her father, who held a long gun in his hand.

"Ha!" he said, "this is well. Now, girl, you have placed my revenge in my hands. This way, Enrico; I think we have snared our bird."

Enrico, whose departure for the army had been a mere feint, came forward with a savage look upon his face. At a signal from La Vega, they dragged Zara away, and all was silent in the chaparral. Just at dusk Edward Fairfield appeared at the foot of the tree, and thrust his hand into the cavity. While stooping and peering into the gloomy recesses of the tree he was suddenly pounced upon by half a dozen men, and held fast.

"Now, accused robber, we have you," cried La Vega. "Bring him forward, men!"

Edward could see that he was surrounded by a motley group of guerrillas, heavily armed, who regarded him with looks of fierce delight. Even while struggling he gave utterance to a signal whistle of wonderful clearness, and then suffered himself to be led on, until he reached an open glade, in which more of the wild band congregated. And there, held fast by two men, he saw Zara, who cried out in agony as she saw him a prisoner.

"There is little need to waste words, Señor Americano," said La Vega. "You have been found lurking within my encampment, evidently as a spy. We might hang you, but we will not waste our time in that way. Tie him to yonder tree, men."

He was bound fast to the tree, and as they led him forward, again gave utterance to that strange whistle.

"Gag him," said La Vega. "Do not let him try that again."

Zara threw off the hands which held her, and, as a firing party stepped out and leveled their weapons, ran in between. With an angry oath, La Vega ran in and seized her; but she resisted with all the strength she possessed. Velasquez came forward and lent his aid, and they removed the struggling girl.

"Stand forward, men," cried La Vega. "Take aim—"

The words were just trembling on his lips when the crack of rifles sounded through the chaparral, and a score of blue coats appeared upon the scene, weapons in hand. They were a part of the Mounted Rifles, the terror of the Mexicans, who fled like sheep, hotly pursued by the Americans, and scarcely three out of their number ever saw their homes again. La Vega resisted to the last, refusing to be made a prisoner, and fell by the hand of a private of the Rifles. Velasquez was made prisoner, and was sent to Texas. The warning whistle of Fairfield had brought them, just in time to save his life. Zara was conducted in safety to Monterey, and sent in under a flag to an uncle in the city, who was a secret friend of the Americans. When the war was over Zara gave her hand and fortune to the man who had won her heart, and went with him to his Texan home.

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MY EXPERIENCE

BY JOE JOY, JR.

I heard Niagara's thunder-roar,
I saw its waters leap in frenzy,
I stood to wonder and adore,
And caught the infatuation.

I sailed across the main whose ways
Were strewn with many a floating wreck,
I lost myself in deep amaze,
But found myself quite sick.

I saw Mont Blanc, that towering rose,
And took the topmost winter breeze,
I stood to mark its glittering snows,
And then began to sneeze.

I stood beneath St. Peter's dome,
Where all we know of Art is shown,
I gazed bewildered, awed and dumb,
And had my come-trod on.

I braved the flood Leander crossed,
Whose beacon-star was Hero's lamp,
I turned again unto the coast
Because I got the cramp.

I clomb the grand old Pyramid,
Saw stretch away the sandy seas,
And I was full of wonderment,
And likewise full of fears.

And once I took farewell of friends
And crossed the brine to Coney Isle,
I had my pockets picked, eye blacked,
And shipwrecked was my tile.

You see I've sought each classic spot
My roving fancy had a beat for,
But somehow found I always got
More than I ever went for.

Just in Time.

BY ROGER STARBURCK.

The setting sun shed rosy light upon the waters of Plymouth harbor, Massachusetts. The golden rays streaming down through the rigging of a neat coasting schooner, anchored alongside a lonely pier, a short distance below the town, fell upon a pretty picture!

This was Minnie Warden, a beautiful girl of seventeen, wearing a broad-brimmed straw hat, and a dark dress, trimmed with red, which well became her rich olive complexion, glossy black hair and lively, piquant features. Every movement of the superb neck seemed to show to advantage the peculiar *likeness* of the matchless form, from the shoulders to the neat little gaiters, with the white stockings just revealed.

She leaned over the schooner's after-rail, her gaze turned seaward, with a look half vexatious, half expectant.

Soon a fine-looking young sailor made his appearance, coming up a lane leading toward the pier.

At sight of Minnie, his whole face flushed with joy and his eyes shone like stars.

The girl blushed and smiled, as he took off his hat and bowed to her.

They had not seen each other for many months.

He was Captain Harry Windham, of the schooner. Minnie and he had been early playmates—boy and girl lovers. Several years previously she had left her mother to go to boarding school. During her vacations, she and Harry had met but once or twice, as he was often away on coasting voyages.

The old mate of the schooner, Mr. Briggs, was her uncle.

Home on vacation, at the present time, she had come aboard to see him.

"To see me," her uncle had said, mischievously, "and who else?"

"For shame, uncle," she had answered, pouting, "do you suppose—"

"He'll be here, presently," her uncle had interrupted.

"There!" Minnie had exclaimed, whirling round on her heel, and dealing her uncle a light box on the ear, "I'll go right home to mamma! She sent me here to invite you to dinner to-morrow, but you are so bad that I am sorry I told you."

"I can not come. We sail at ten o'clock to-night, to be gone on a three months' voyage."

The young girl turned pale. Then she went on deck, and, as mentioned, stood by the rail, watching for Harry, for whom she also had a message from her mother.

Harry came aboard. She blushed deeply as they shook hands.

"You are looking finely," said he; "you have improved."

They conversed a few minutes, when Minnie said:

"We have a dinner-party to-morrow. Mamma wants you to come; but uncle says you sail at ten o'clock. Could you not put it off?"

"Do you wish it?" he inquired.

She smiled, then drew herself up.

"Mamma wishes it," she said, coquettishly and pointedly.

Harry looked sad.

The dark eyes were shyly turned an instant toward his downcast face.

The young captain loved this girl.

He had heard, however, that a young and handsome dry goods clerk visited her whenever she was home on vacation.

Report said they would make a match of it—were probably already engaged.

This had caused him much sorrow. Now he was determined, ere consenting to put off his sailing, to ascertain the truth at once; to propose to Minnie, and thus learn if she loved him or the other.

With a frankness rather abrupt, but peculiar to him, he now said, looking her square in the eyes:

"Minnie, I love you: will you be my wife?"

She smiled, blushed and tossed her glossy head like a young colt.

Encouraged he took her hand. She drew it quickly but not ungently away from him, and, without answering, but apparently much embarrassed, commenced beating a tattoo on the deck with the heel of one of her little boots.

"Harry! Harry!" screamed Briggs from the cabin at this juncture, "come, quick!"

The young man ran into the cabin, thinking that nothing short of the schooner being on fire would have caused Briggs to scream out so lustily.

He learned, however, that the mate had merely discovered and was searching for a big rat, which he had seen run into the pantry.

Harry remained below about five minutes; then, trembling with impatience, he went on deck to get his answer from Minnie.

She was gone!

Something white lay on the deck. He picked it up—to discover a small piece of paper, upon which, in Minnie's handwriting, was scratched with a pencil:

"I have no love to give. My heart is another's!"

So this was her answer. She had written it and then run away, not even stopping to bid him good-by!

He crushed the note in his hand, and threw it overboard.

At nine o'clock, while Briggs and his men were making preparations to sail, Minnie's mother came aboard.

"Where is she?" inquired the matron of Captain Windham, who, with stern face and knitted brows, after his great sorrow, was seated in the cabin.

"Who, madam?" he inquired, much startled.

"My child—Minnie—she is aboard here, is she not?"

"Good heavens, no! Has she not gone home?"

"No. My child! My child! Oh, what can have happened to her?"

"I do not understand it," answered Harry. "She must have left here at seven o'clock. Perhaps she has stopped at some friend's on the way."

"No: I have inquired at the house of every friend."

"Strange," said Harry, hoarsely; "this must be looked into."

He told Briggs to put off the sailing of the vessel, explaining about the missing one.

Briggs and he put on their coats, and went to assist Mrs. Warden in her search.

For an hour the search was in vain. Suddenly, however, while Briggs and Harry were returning toward the pier, they thought they could distinguish a dark object behind one of the huge logs, supporting the bridge.

The two men ran aboard, and lowering the schooner's boat, soon reached the object, to discover, by the light of their lanterns, that it was Minnie!

Her arms were entangled in the bight of a rope, which, extending from the schooner, was fast to the post of the pier, her head hung sideways while her body was in the water.

She was either senseless or dead!

The men conveyed her into the schooner's cabin, when Harry applied a bottle of brandy to her lips.

Color came to her cheeks; she opened her eyes.

Soon she was able to make explanations. While Harry was in the cabin, she had leaned too far across the rail, and had fallen overboard. The tide had carried her toward the post of the pier. Already she had sunk twice, but, on rising the third time, she had grasped the rope, which, catching round her arms, had held her, as shown, although, becoming senseless, she knew no more from that time until she was restored.

It was at this moment that he uttered the words with which I have opened the story.

Without question, those who were forging ahead again drew rein, and fell back into line.

"Who's got a bit uv spunk?" asked the old trapper, and instantly half a dozen pieces of punk were produced and held up.

"One's snuff. Set her afire, an' keep her that away till I hollers. Jess look, boyes, how ther wind's a-gittin' up. It'll blow harder'n that in a lee'tle, an' then we've got 'em, durn ther greasy top-knots! we've got 'em bad!"

By this time the flanking party, making the half-circle far beyond range of our rifles, their fresh mustangs going five feet to our wearied ones' two, had nearly succeeded in getting between us and the rock, or rather mound of rocks, as I afterward found it to be.

As old Rube had predicted, the wind rose steadily, and in less than a quarter of an hour after he had called for the "spunk" it was blowing what sailors would have called a "half-gale."

We were riding *with* it, and consequently did not fully realize its full force.

At length the moment for action upon our part arrived, or so thought old Rube at least.

Behind us, something over half a mile distant, rode part of the Comanche war-party, numbering twenty-five warriors, while in front, or nearly so, at an equal distance, and about equal in number, were those who had been sent out to cut off the approach to the mound.

"Halt!" shouted Rube, jerking his mustang back upon her haunches, and leaping down.

"Now, then," he continued, suiting the action to the word, "pull peratry weeds jess es of yur war workin' to save yer hair!"

"The boys' took!" in an instant, and for a minute or two no sound was heard, save the cracking of dry stalks as we gathered great handfuls of the grass and weeds, tearing them up, and throwing them as far as possible in front.

In a surprising short space of time we had a space some thirty or forty yards long, by two or three in width, clear of all combustible stuff.

Tech her off, an' then make fur y'r critters," again shouted the old trapper.

The burning punk was applied, a bright flame shot up, and we shot off to where the horses stood, held by some of the men, a few yards back in the grass.

"Now, boyes, give ther imps ther belly full!" cried the irrepressible Rube. "They wants ter fout, an' we ar' goin' to accomodate 'em!"

Charge 'em, boyes. Whoop!" and down upon the startled savages we rode like a thunderbolt.

Fifteen to twenty-five was about an even thing, and no ranger would ever want better odds.

The other half were completely cut off, and instead of coming to their comrades' assistance, they were flying, and hopelessly, to escape the demon that swiftly pursued.

Between them and us there had arisen a wall of fire that no living thing could pass.

Well, we made short work of those Comanches, and then came the task of looking out for ourselves.

Despite the high wind, so inflammable were the tall weeds and grass, the fire was "eating" its way back, and we found that we would have to ride rapidly to reach timber, or else be forced to travel directly against the wind until the prairie ended.

We managed, however, to do the former, and by ten o'clock that night, rode into camp, buffalo meat and all safe and sound.

The recent terrible atrocities perpetrated in Paris, by Frenchmen upon Frenchmen, most vividly recalls the "Reign of Terror," toward the close of the last century, when prisons fairly swarmed with victims for the guillotine. Among the incidents of that awful time is that of the "Cave of Death," whose true story is as follows:

In the early part of the French revolution, the prisons of Lyons were filled with thousands of unhappy victims. Seventy-two prisoners who were condemned, were thrown into the Cave of Death on the 9th of December, there to wait the execution of their sentence. This could not be the next day, because it was the Decadi. One of the prisoners, of the name of Porral, only twenty-two years of age, of a bold and ardent spirit, profited of this interval to devise a plan of escape. His sisters, having by means of a very large bribe obtained access to this abode of horror, began to weep around him. "It is not now a time to weep," said he, "it is the moment to arm ourselves with resolution and activity, and endeavor to find some way by which we can elude our menaced fate. Bring me files, a chisel, a turn-screw, and other instruments; bring wine in abundance; bring a

poniard, that if reduced to extremity, we may not perish without the means of defense. By this grate, which looks into the Rue Lafont, you can give me these things; I will be in waiting there the whole day to receive them."

The sisters, retired, and in the course of the day, at different visits, brought a variety of tools, twelve fowls, and about sixty bottles of wine. Porral communicated his project to four others, bold and active like himself, and the whole business was arranged. The evening arrived; a general supper was proposed—the last they thought they should ever eat. The prisoners supped well, and exhorted each other to meet their fate the next morning with heroism. The wine was briskly circulated, till the company were laid fast asleep.

At eleven o'clock, the associates began their labors; one of them was placed as a sentinel next the door of the cave, armed with a poniard, ready to dispatch the turnkey, if at his visit at two o'clock in the morning he should appear to suspect any thing; the others, pulling off their coats, began to make their excavations.

At the extremity of the second cave they found a huge door, and on this they began their operations. It was of oak, and double barred; by degrees the hinges gave way to the file, and the door was no longer held by them; but still they could not force it open; it was held by something on the other side. A hole was made in it with a chisel, and, looking through, they perceived it was tied by a very strong rope to a post at a distance. This was a terrible moment! They endeavored in vain to cut the rope with the chisel or file, but they could not reach it. A piece of wax candle, however, was procured; and being lit, and tied to the end of a stick, they thrust it through the hole in the door, and burnt the cord asunder. The door was then opened, and the adventurers proceeded forward.

They now found themselves in another vault, in the midst of which was a large slab of stone, which seemed laid there for some particular purpose. They struck upon it, and found it was hollow. This gave them hopes that it was placed to cover the entrance of some subterranean passage; perhaps it might be one that led to the Rhone. They succeeded in removing the stone, and found, to their inexpressible transport, that it was indeed a subterranean passage, and they doubted not that here they should find an issue. They then tied their handkerchiefs together, and one of them, named Labatre, taking hold of the end with one hand, and carrying a light in the other, descended to explore the place.

Alas! their hopes were in a moment blasted; instead of finding any passage by which they could escape, he found this was an old well, dried up and heaped with rubbish. Labatre returned with a heavy heart; some other means must be sought.

A door at the extremity of the cave now appeared their only resource. On this they set to work with the same ardor, and succeeded in forcing it open. But this led only to another vault, which served as a depot for confiscated effects and merchandise. Among other things was a large trunk full of shirts. They profited of this discovery to make an exchange of linen; and instead of the clean ones which they took they left their own, which they had worn for many weeks. Two doors beside that at which they had entered now offered themselves to their choice. They began to attack one, but they had scarcely applied the file when they were alarmed by the barking of a dog behind. A general consternation seized the party; the work was stopped in an instant; perhaps the door led into the apartments of the jailer. This idea, recalled to their minds that it was now near two o'clock, the time of his visit. One of the party returned toward the Cave of Death to see whether all was safe; and it was agreed to suspend their labors till his return. They had need of some moments rest, and they took advantage of them to fortify themselves for the rest of their work by taking some wine.

When the scout returned, he said that on his arrival at the Cave of Death, he shuddered with horror to find the turnkey there already. The man, however, who had been left as a sentinel, had engaged him to drink with him; and the scout, joining the party, they plied him so well that he at last reeled off without much examining the cave, and was in all probability laid fast asleep for the rest of the night. This was very consolatory news.

Quitting the door at which they heard the dog bark, they applied themselves to the other. They found here folding doors, one of which they opened, and found themselves in a long, dark passage. At the end they perceived another door; but, listening, they heard voices; it in fact led to the guard-house, where several soldiers in their national uniform were assembled. This was, indeed, a terrible stroke; had they then got so far, only to meet with a worse obstacle than they had yet encountered?

Only one resource now remained, and this was a door which they had passed on the side of the passage, and which they had not attempted, because they conceived it must lead to the great court of the Hotel de Ville, and they would rather have found some other exit; but,

"All desperate hazards courage do create,
As he plays frankly who has least estate;
Presence of mind and courage in distress,
Are more than armies to procure success."

In fact, having forced the door, it appeared they were not mistaken; that they were at the bottom of a staircase which led into the court. It was now half-past four o'clock; the morning was dark and cold, while rain and snow were falling in abundance. The associates embraced each other with transport, and were preparing to mount the staircase when Porral cried out, "What are you about? if we attempt to go at present, all is over with us. The gate is now shut, and if any one should be perceived in the court the alarm would instantly be given, and all would be discovered. After having had the courage to penetrate thus far, let us have resolution still to wait a while. At eight o'clock the gate will be opened, and the passage through the court free. We can then steal out by degrees, and mingling with the numbers that are constantly passing and repassing, we can go away without being perceived. It is not till ten o'clock the prisoners are summoned to execution; between eight and ten there will be time enough for all of us to get away. We will return to the cave; and when the time of departure arrives, each of us will inform two others of the means of escape offered. We shall then be fifteen, and going out three at a time, we shall pass unobserved. Let the last three, as they set off, inform three others, and thus in succession we may all escape." This plan appeared judicious and safe; it was unanimously agreed to, and the associates returning to the cave, made choice of those who should first be informed of what they had done.

Montellier, a notary, and Baron de Chaffoy, to whom the means of escape were offered, refused to avail themselves of them, the former from a confidence of a pardon, as he had been mistaken for his brother; and the latter, though in the flower of his age, declared all his ties in the world broken, and that life had nothing now to offer which could make him desirous of prolonging it. They were both guillotined the next morning.

The fate of the fifteen who fled was very dissimilar, and the escape of the rest was prevented by the imprudence of one of them. The last of the fifteen who, on quitting the cave, was, according to the plan arranged, privately to apprise fifteen others; instead of doing so, cried aloud, "The passage is open; let him that can escape." This excited a great movement among the prisoners. They arose in an instant, doubting whether what they heard could be true, or whether he who uttered these words was not mad. The noise they made alarmed the sentinel without; he called to the turnkey; they hastened immediately to the cave, perceived what had been done, and closing up the door by which the prisoners had escaped, placed a strong guard before it. Nesple, who had excited this movement, was, with three others, taken and executed. Another of the fugitives took refuge in the house of a friend in an obscure street, but he was discovered, brought back, and guillotined.

Porral, the original author of the plan, took refuge in the house of one who was considered a good patriot, and escaped the observation of a party of the commissaries who entered the house. As soon as they were gone, he began to think of making his way out of the city as fast as possible. When he arrived at the Place Belle-Cour, he found parties of the gendarmes dispersed everywhere. Porral went into a house, and making known who he was, entered an asylum. The inhabitants were women, timid to excess; but the desire of saving an innocent person rendered them courageous. They conducted him into a garret, and concealed him behind some planks standing up in a corner, where he spent the remainder of the day in safety. In the evening, Porral, dressed in women's clothes, with a basket on his head and another on his arm, passed the bridge of La Guillotiere, and quitted the city.

"On deck, I found your note—" began Harry, when she interrupted him.

"My note?"

"Yes, in which you rejected me."

"I am sure," she cried, astonished, "I had no intention—of—of—rejecting you. You took me by surprise, but—but—I had intended," she added, blushing deeply, "to have given you a *favourable* answer."

"You love me—you will be my wife, then?" cried Harry, in an ecstasy of delight.

"How, then, about that note?"

She looked puzzled; then suddenly thrust her hand in her pocket.

"I see!" she exclaimed. "I must have dropped that note, which is a copy of one I sent to the dry goods clerk, in answer to a written proposal from him!"

Harry, who had sent Briggs away to inform Mrs. Waldon of her daughter's recovery, showered kisses on the young girl's lips.

Her mother entered the cabin soon after. There is little to add.

Harry and Briggs were at the dinner-party.

About six months later, there was another party in honor of Minnie's wedding with Captain Windham.

The young man lived happily with his pretty wife, whom he prized all the more that he had so nearly lost her.

Camp-Fire Yarns.

"Separating" a War-Party.

BY RALPH RINGWOOD.

"STEADY, that, 'ee durned chuckle-heads! Don't you see they're tryin' to git between us an' the big rock? Let 'em do it, let 'em do it! an' chaw me to eternity if I don't make 'em sick at ther stummucks!"

It was old Rube Langley that spoke, or rather yelled, to some of the boys on the left of the line who were riding a little faster than the trapper thought they ought to do.

The situation was briefly this.

We had left camp, fifteen of us, that morning, for a buffalo drive, a large herd, or drove, having been seen on a neighboring prairie the day before, and after a successful hunt that had carried us further from camp than we had intended, we were returning, well laden with meat, late in the afternoon.

While about the center of a large "weed" prairie, one of the rangers discovered a tuft

ed head away off to the southward, and a moment later fifty others were bobbing up and down above the grass as they urged their mustangs at a swift gallop toward us.

"Comanche!" grunted old Rube, after a moment's inspection. "We've got to dig fur it, boyes, an' ther durned quick, er the imps 'll be onto us."

"Which way, Rube?" sung out one of the fellows.

"Foller y'r nose," was the old trapper's answer; he was standing up in his stirrups, gazing off in a north-easterly direction.

"Less see," I heard him mutter. "Ther big rock oughter lay summers away thar, but, dang it all, I hain't seen it. Ef we could reach that pint we'd foolish these varmints sum, I reckon." Then, as if he had determined the matter in his own mind, he shouted; "Git the word, boyes, an' hyar's the road!" and digging his spurs into the old raw-boned mustang he rode, the trapper led the party at a good round pace.

For two or three miles we managed to keep about the same distance in advance of our pursuers with which we had started, but, after that, first one, and then another, and another fell behind, and were being rapidly gained upon by the Indians.

"Won't do! we've got to keep in a bunch!" exclaimed old Rube, reining in. "Ther skunks'll snake us one after another till they rubs us all out, ef we keeps on this way!"

The wisdom of the remark was admitted at once, and in a few moments we were again all together.

It had been my custom in emergencies like the present, when old Rube was with us, to keep my eye on his movements. I could always judge pretty correctly as to the chances of escape by his manner, as well, or better, than by what he said, and, at the same time, be in position to quickly assist in carrying out any sudden movement he might order to be made. None of us ever thought of going contrary to his advice or orders, and in a hundred instances we had realized the good of so doing.

I had kept a bright look-out for the "big rock" I heard the old fellow muttering about, and at the time we held in to permit the others coming up, I saw, far ahead, a dark object rising from the level which I judged to be the wished-for haven.

"Is that the rock, Rube?" I asked.

"It ar' thet, but I see suthin' better'n git'tin' thar. See the skunks dividin' so's to cut us off!"

It was at this moment that he uttered the words with which I have opened the story.

Without question, those who were forging ahead again drew rein, and fell back into line.

"Who's got a bit uv spunk?" asked the old trapper, and instantly half a dozen pieces of punk were produced and held up.

"One's snuff. Set her afire, an' keep her that away till I hollers. Jess look, boyes, how ther wind's a-gittin' up. It'll blow harder'n that in a lee'tle, an' then we've got 'em, durn ther greasy top-knots! we've got 'em bad!"

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At length the moment for action upon our part arrived, or so thought old Rube at least.

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